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## PETER, THE DANDY GREENHORN

BY NOAH NUFF.



WITH AN ANGRY TOSS OF HER HEAD, THE OLD COW SENT PETER FLYING HEAD-OVER-HEELS OFF THE SICKLE.

PETER,  
THE DANDY GREENHORN,  
AND  
His Comical Adventures in  
the Country.

BY NOAH NUFF.

CHAPTER I.

PETER PEPPERGRASS GOES TO THE COUNTRY TO RUSTICATE AND TO ASTONISH THE NATIVES—HIS ADVENT AND RECEPTION IN SQUASHVILLE.

"SQUASHVILLE!"

Thus yelled the brakeman as a train on the Squedunk-an-t Panhandle R. R. halted at an inland Jersey village.

"Squashville! Come, climb off lively!" he repeated as if in a hurry to get rid of the passenger.

"By George! We've got here at last," ejaculated a youth, with a gaudily-checked suit, cardinal necktie, double-decked collar and high hat, as he hastily erected himself, grabbed his carpet-sack and ten-cent cane and made a dash for the car-door.

He reached the platform and the train rolled on. No other passengers got off.

"So this is Squashville," mused the youth with the high hat, gazing at the collection of a dozen buildings or so that made up the village. "Pretty sleepy-looking place, but I reckon Peter Peppergrass is the chap to astonish the natives and wake 'em up. I'm going to rusticate around here for awhile this summer and scoop in the country boys and make love to the good looking girls. Well, I should twitter!" and, with a smile of supreme self-conceit and satisfaction, Peter Peppergrass—for that was the important young man's cognomen—stepped off the platform.

Grasping his carpet sack tightly in one hand and lightly twirling his cane with the other, Peppergrass airily strode down the dust-paved Main street of Squashville.

On a fence near the blacksmith shop was perched a red-headed youth, with a sleepy eye and a freckled nose. In front of this rising young citizen halted Peppergrass.

"Sonny," he began, "can you inform me where I can find board in the country around here?"

"Reckon so," carelessly responded the fiery-haired youth; "what kind of a board d'ye want, hemlock, pine, basswood or hickory?"

Peter's face grew red. Could it be possible that the youthful Squashvillian had the audacity and cheek to endeavor to chaff him—and he fresh from the city?

It seemed that it could.

Peppergrass summoned up a withering glance, warranted to kill at forty paces, and said, severely:

"Sonny, I am from New York!"

Then he paused to watch the effect of his

words. He expected to see the carrot-topped youth fall off the fence. But the boy didn't wither for a cent. He opened one eye a trifle, casually dropped the lid of the other, and chirped:

"From the city, hey? Glad to hear it. Thort from yer looks ye had broke loose from the idgit asylum."

Then Peppergrass was mad.

His dignity had received a severe fracture. Carefully depositing his carpet-sack and cane on the wooden sidewalk, he assumed a pugilistic attitude, and exclaimed:

"Sonny, if you will climb down from that fence, I'll polish you off in regular city style, and learn you some manners."

"Sonny" didn't wait for a second invitation. He climbed down in a leisurely sort of way and sauntered in Peter's direction.

Peppergrass struck out at him once—just once. After that it was pretty hard to tell what did happen. But when the cloud of dust cleared away Peter was lying on his back in the middle of the street, with his carpet-sack, cane and high hat piled on top of him, while the Skaneateles-haired youth had clambered back on the fence again, and was calmly dozing away as if nothing bad happened.

To say that Peter Peppergrass was simply astonished would be drawing it very mild indeed. He was completely paralyzed.

For some time he wasn't sure whether he had collided with an express train under a full head of steam, or had been telescoped by the heels of a Texas mule.

But, finally, a dim, shadowy suspicion began to dawn on his mind that perhaps the red-headed youth had something to do with it. It was a great surprise to him; but he didn't care to investigate the matter any further. The youth was apparently asleep, and somehow it struck Peter that it would be just as well not to wake him up again.

Nobody had noticed Peppergrass's sudden downfall, therefore he didn't feel as bad over it as he otherwise would.

Smothering his rising indignation, he sprung to his feet, and after carefully dusting off his gorgeous raiment and his high hat, he picked up his personal property, and stepped off with his head as high as ever.

Peppergrass was not crushed by a long sight. He wasn't that sort of a youth. His self-conceit might receive a shock now and then, but it was pretty hard to down him completely. No matter how severe the concussion, in a few minutes he would be chirping around again as lively and cheerful as a Minnesota grasshopper.

Down the street went Peter, straight to the corner grocery, and entered.

"My man," he said, addressing the proprietor, "can you direct me to a country boarding-house hereabout?"

The proprietor was a young man with a rural countenance and cowhide boots. For an instant he stared at Peter in amazement. He had seen people from the city before, but none who were rigged out in Peter's unique style.

"Come, my man," continued Peppergrass in a lordly tone, "I can't wait all day for the information."

The proprietor grinned.

"You want a boarding-house, eh?" he asked.

"Yes, of course; that's what I said," replied Peter, impatiently.

"Well, I reckon old Sol Hayseed back here in the country a mile or so is the man you want to see. He takes in boarders and durned fules occasionally."

"Where can I find him?" asked Peter, loftily ignoring the latter portion of the proprietor's remarks.

"Like to have me come out and show you the route?"

"Yes."

The proprietor was accommodating. He came around from behind the counter, took Peppergrass by the collar and walked him to the door, then turning him around so that he was headed for the country he exclaimed:

"Taere! now travel right along in that direction and you'll find him," accompanying his advice with a terrific kick under Peter's coat tail, which jarred his hat down over his eyes and sent him flying for a rod or so in a manner considerably more hasty than dignified.

Again was Peter's indignation aroused.

"What do you mean?" he demanded, glaring around at the grinning owner of the corner grocery.

"Oh, nothing much. Just giving you a lift on your journey," was the cool reply; "and maybe the next time you want any information you'll ask for it in a different style. Want anything more of me?"

Peppergrass concluded that he didn't. He hauled in his horns, as it were, and ambled on in the direction which had been thus forcibly pointed out to him.

Squashville proper was not for Peppergrass. What he wanted was to rusticate, to get out in the verdant meads where he could listen to the mellow bleating of the silver-throated swine and the musical warbling of the Mormon bull and his numerous family as they playfully gambolled on the greensward.

The reception that Peter had received in Squashville was something different from what he had expected, vastly different. But, he wasn't at all stuck up or haughty on that account. Strange to say, he wasn't.

Peter stepped off as meekly as a condemned army mule going to the boneyard, until he got outside of the village. Then his mind seemed to grow easier, his self-conceit resumed its sway; and, from the gait he struck, one would naturally imagine he was the landed proprietor of the whole county.

Along the dus'y highway he sailed as serenely as a clam sloop in a summer breeze.

Presently he sighted a farm-house, barn and several other buildings. It was the Hayseed ranch.

An old chap, airily attired in one suspender, a straw hat, part of a shirt, blue jean pants and a pair of cowhide boots, was in the garden, wrestling with the weeds.

Peppergrass approached and looked over the fence.

"Does Solomon Hayseed live here?" he inquired.

"Hey?" shouted the old farmer.

"No, not Hay; I said Hayseed," explained Peter.

"Oh—ah—yes, that's my name! Didn't understand ye at first," responded the farmer, jumping up and approaching the fence. Then he added: "Dum it! yo made me pull up an onyun right along with the weeds, when ye yelled at me," and he looked at the ruined onion as sadly as if he had lost a yearling colt.

"I beg pardon," said Peppergrass, "but I wished to see you about engaging board for the summer season."

"Where air ye from?" asked the farmer.

"New York," was Peter's proud reply.

"I reckon ye hain't one of these bu'sted bank cashyeres nor nuthin' of that sort, air ye?" continued Mr. Hayseed, doubtfully.

Peppergrass assured him that he was not. Then the wily old granger gave him another looking over, and after some moments' reflection, said:

"Well, yer looks air somewhat ag'in' ye, but I guess I'll take ye in."

This wasn't very complimentary, but Peter didn't seem to mind that any. His æsthetic mind was above noticing small things of that sort.

The preliminaries were soon settled.

Peppergrass was to pay six dollars a week, eat at the table with the hired man and the rest of the family, and range around the ranch as he pleased.

Mr. Hayseed informed Peppergrass that there was a pond at the lower end of the farm where he could go fishing and bathing, and in case he felt like going hunting, there were plenty of woodchucks, squirrels, chipmunks, rats, crows, hen-hawks and other game around the place.

Peppergrass, of course, was highly pleased to hear this. Then when supper was ready, and he was duly introduced to the family and made the discovery that Farmer Hayseed was the proud parent of a pretty, buxom daughter, he fairly grinned all over with delight.

Peter imagined that he had tumbled into a soft thing. Lots of hunting, fishing, bathing, etc., and a pretty damsel to make love to! Well, it was just "too too," and no mistake, and Peter just laid himself out to make a good impression on the Hayseed family—especially the good-looking daughter.

He was as polite as a dancing-master all through the meal, and when the old farmer accidentally upset a quart bowl of gravy in Peter's lap, he smiled, did Peter, as if he was actually pleased with the performance. Mr. Hayseed tried to apologize, but Peppergrass wouldn't have it at all.

"Don't mention it," he exclaimed; "it isn't of the slightest consequence; don't speak of it," and he actually looked as if nothing could please him more than to have the farmer hunt up something else to spill on him.

Peppergrass had brought along a bottle of grease eradicator, for use in emergencies of this sort, and he knew what he was smiling about.

After supper he went up to his room, "eradicated" the gravy, then brushed up and wandered forth to inspect the ranch.

He meandered around for awhile, and then he discovered Miranda Q. Hayseed—the farmer's

lovely and lively daughter—engaged in her usual evening pastime of milking the cows.

Peppergrass admiringly gazed on her from a distance for a time, then he approached her, and smiling one of his fascinating smiles, exclaimed, with a tip of his hat and an extra-polite bow:

"Ah, Miss Hayseed, I see that you are busy-ing yourself with the delightful pursuits inci-dental to rural life."

Peter was anxious to make a good impression on the young lady, and he thought this speech would do very well for a beginning. When he finished Miranda Q. looked up with a becoming blush, and replied:

"Really, I can't say that I fancy the work much, but farmers' girls must be milk-maids as well, you know."

She had intimated that she was not fond of her task. Now was Peter's chance to get in his fine work, and show the young lady what he could do, and earn her thanks besides; and he at once proceeded to improve the opportunity.

"Won't you allow me to do the—the—what do you call it, milking or churning?" stammered Peppergrass.

"Milking."

"I knew it was one or the other. Now, Miss Hayseed, please let me milk while you look on and rest yourself."

"But, I would prefer to do it myself, Mr. Peppergrass," she blushingly replied.

"Oh, no, Miss Hayseed. I couldn't think of standing by and seeing you work so hard. Your face is red now from the exertion," continued Peppergrass.

In vain the young lady blushed and protested. Peppergrass politely but firmly insisted on taking her place, and she was finally forced to comply.

She arose and stepped aside, then Peter gracefully seated himself on the three-legged stool, balanced the pail, which was half-full of milk, between his knees, and began his great teat-squeezing act.

Peppergrass was a phenomenal milk-maid. He probably knew as much about milking as a fiddler-crab knew about the base-viol.

The cow he was experimenting on was a peaceable old heifer of some twenty summers, and she had browsed around the country considerably; but Peter's style of teat-pulling was entirely new to her. The expression of pain and surprise that flitted over that ancient heifer's countenance when Peppergrass first began his performance, was almost human in its deep and solicitous intensity. She glanced around at Peppergrass with a reproachful look, but he kept right on, yanking away at the milking apparatus as if he was doing the job by contract.

The old cow stood it as long as she could, then she turned around like a flash and with an angry toss of her head sent Peter flying head over heels off the stool. His high hat was jammed way down over his ears, the pail had upset as he went over, and he was soaked with milk from head to foot, and when he got up he was a sad-looking sight.

Peppergrass wasn't anxious to milk any

more cows—not particularly. He plunged over the fence and sneaked away to his room without even apologizing for spilling the milk.

## CHAPTER II.

### PETER GOES FISHING—IN A FROG POND—THINKS HE WILL WALLOP A PLOWBOY.

THE Hayseed family were not blessed—or afflicted, as the case may be—with a sight of Peppergrass again until late the next morning.

By that time his clothes were dry, and the "eradicator" had got in its fine work again, so he looked quite presentable once more, though his expensive checked suit did not have that air of gaudy newness which it once possessed.

However, Peppergrass had come to the country to enjoy himself, and he wasn't going to be cast down by trifles.

If he could make a conquest with each suit of clothes, he didn't care how many he ruined—as long as his tailor would trust him.

He felt sure the farmer's daughter was going to be an easy prey to his irresistible fascinations. But he thought it would be just as well to keep in the background for a day or so, and let her forget about the cow episode.

Peppergrass occasionally stumbled across a wise idea—and this was one of them.

Therefore he concluded to spend the day in fishing.

Farmer Hayseed hunted up an old fishpole and line, and clawed around in the garden and scooped up a ten-quart pan half-full of fish-worms.

Thus equipped Peppergrass sauntered away in the direction of the pond as pointed out by the farmer. He walked for a couple of hours and saw several ponds, but none that seemed to be the correct thing according to his idea of it, and finally he thought he would inquire his way.

There was a farmer's boy plowing in a field near by, and unto him approached Peppergrass.

"Boy," he began, "I'm from the city, and I am boarding over at Solomon Hayseed's."

"Yaas? Purty tough place to board, but I calkilate it's good enough fur some folks," drawled the boy.

"I am going fishing," continued Peter, "and I—"

"Yaas?" broke in the boy; "waal ye've got enough worms with ye to ketch all the fish in the hull State."

"But, Mr. Hayseed told me there were plenty of fish in his pond."

"Yaas? So there is, I reckon."

"Well, that is what I expected, but I can't find the pond. I was about to ask you where it was when you interrupted me, sonny."

"Yaas? Reckon I kin put ye on the right track. See that little pond down there a piece, in front of the red school-house?"

"Yes."

"Reckon that's the pond ye'r' lookin' fur," concluded the boy, and then he shouted at the horses and went on with his plowing.

"Pretty sassy young chap, but I managed to get the information out of him. Takes me to

get away with 'em," commented Peppergrass, as he started in the direction of the pond that had been pointed out to him.

He reached it and prepared to fish.

The pond was a very small one, and the water looked rather muddy and slimy, and there were a lot of ducks and geese running around it. But Peppergrass supposed it was all right. He knew there were plenty of fish in that pond of Hayseed's, and he was bound to capture four or five dozen of them or smash the fish-pole in the attempt.

Baiting the hook carefully with a couple of worms, he chuck'd it into the pond and sat down to wait for a bite. He waited right along pretty steady for half an hour. Then he hauled up to see what the trouble was.

The worms were intact.

Nothing had touched them.

Peppergrass wondered what it meant. He had heard somewhere that spitting on the bait was something that generally pleased the fish, and concluded to try it.

He expectorated on the bait, cast it back in the pond, and then sat down again.

After another long wait he hauled up the line.

Same result as before—worms holding their own; fish *non est*.

Peppergrass began to lose his patience; but it wouldn't do to go back without any fish, and he resolved to stick to it till he caught something—in other words, to fight it out on that fish-line if it took all summer.

Slowly the hours dragged their weary lengths along, and still Peter fished—that is he sat on the bank of the pond and watched the fish-line. Don't know as it could properly be called fishing, seeing that he caught nothing.

Finally, school was let out for recess, and some of the boys came strolling down to the pond.

They looked Peppergrass over as if they thought he was a curiosity of some sort.

They commenced to wink at each other and giggle. Something evidently struck them as being very funny.

Peter's dignity was offended, but they were only a lot of school-boys, and he thought he would pass their actions by in silent contempt, as they deserved. Therefore he fished right ahead and said nothing.

"W'ot yer doin', mister?" one of the boys finally asked.

Peppergrass gave him a scornful glance.

"I calculate I am fishing," he replied; "haven't you got any eyes?"

"Fisin'?" snorted the boy, derisively.

"Yes."

"Yer must be purty green, mister. There hain't no fish in that pond, and never was any!" and the boy and his companions all roared as if they considered it as good as a circus in full bloom.

Peter hauled up his fish-pole and wound the line around it with a look of pained surprise on his countenance.

"Isn't this Farmer Hayseed's fishing-pond?" he asked.

Again the crowd roared.

"Not much! That's Jake Shinglewhacker's

goose-pond!" yelled the boy who acted as spokesman.

Fooled? Well, slightly.

Peter Peppergrass taken in and done for by a plow-boy? It was indeed sad.

The expression that flitted over Peter's classic features was a study in itself. It cannot be reproduced in cold type, but it would make the fortune of an artist able to depict it.

Peppergrass finally glanced around and asked:

"Who is that boy plowing in the field above here?"

"That boy? Why, he's old Shinglewhacker's son Bill. Did he direct yer here?"

Peppergrass didn't say. He merely muttered a remark to the effect that Jake Shinglewhacker's son Bill would hear from him mighty suddenly, if not sooner. Then he gathered up his pan and his fishing-tackle, and started off as if he meant business.

He soon reached the field in which the boy was plowing.

The team and driver were near the fence. The latter was apparently waiting for the disappointed fisherman's reappearance, and there was a broad smile on his rustic countenance.

As Peppergrass paused and looked over the fence, the boy's face suddenly straightened and he winked solemnly with his left eye and asked:

"Ketch any fish, mister?"

Peter gasped.

He had never encountered such sublime audacity in his life before.

"Boy," said Peter, impressively, "you lied to me about that pond; and now I'm going to climb over the fence and give you a good wallop with this fish-pole!"

The plow-boy didn't seem to be at all frightened, nor betray the slightest inclination to run away and escape from the terrible fate in store for him.

Not to any great extent he didn't.

He simply placed his thumb to his nose, spread out his fingers and gestured derisively in Peter's direction.

Then Peppergrass climbed over the fence with his pole and pan of fish-worms.

Carefully setting the pan down where it wouldn't be in the way, he took a firm grip on the fish-pole and sailed into the rash youth who had fooled him, the first letter of whose name was Bill Shinglewhacker.

Bill stood there in smiling readiness for the onset.

He seemed pleased to see Peppergrass, and when they met he embraced him like a brother—or a pugilist.

Just what was said and done during the next few minutes will probably never be known; but from the fact that shortly after Peppergrass climbed over the fence, he was seen to frantically clamber back again, with mud on his back, and the fish-pole and pan of fish-worms flying after him, it is conjectured that Jake Shinglewhacker's son Bill rather got the best of it.

Peppergrass didn't stop running until he was in sight of the Hayseed farm-house.

And he didn't go back after the pan or fish-pole, either.

He told the farmer he had lost them, and old Hayseed merely charged them in with his board and let it go at that.

Peter was succeeding nobly in his little job of astonishing the natives.

### CHAPTER III.

PEPPERGRASS THINKS HE WILL RUN THE HAYSEED RANCH FOR A SPELL—ATTEMPTS IT, AND GETS BADLY LEFT.

THE next day Peppergrass cast his eagle eye over the horizon, and concluded that he would go out and show Hayseed and the hired man how to run the ranch.

Peter's uncle's half-sister's step father used to engineer a cabbage conservatory down on Long Island, and Peter had once himself perused a tract entitled, "Cucumbers As An Article of Diet Considered from the Undertaker's Point of View," therefore he considered himself fully competent to take the management of a small-sized farm.

He didn't mean to discharge Hayseed and the hired man—all he intended to do was to assume the direction of affairs for a time and sort of instruct them in their duties and boss things around generally.

In pursuance of this plan Peter sallied forth. He kept on sallying for some time.

Then he ran across the old farmer, who was in the barn busily engaged in thrashing rye with an old-fashioned flail.

The farmer swung the flail with a lusty stroke that fairly made the barn-floor jingle.

Peppergrass stood and watched him for awhile with a critical air.

Then he thought it was getting about time to interfere, and commence running things as they should be.

He informed the farmer that there seemed to be something wrong about his method of flailing—the stroke somehow did not appear to be just right—he had seen pictures of men handling the flail before then he said, and he thought he could show Mr. Hayseed just how it should be done.

The farmer looked at Peppergrass in amazement for a moment; then he laughed a loud and somewhat scornful laugh, something like the hoarse chuckle of a Durham bull chanting its morning lay.

Stepping aside he handed Peppergrass the flail and said:

"Actions speak louder than words, Mr. Peppergrass. I reckon you'd better tackle the thing yerself for a few minutes."

Peter tackled it.

He grasped the handle of the flail with unbounded confidence and his hands, and went in for rye and glory.

He raised the flail once about two feet from the floor, and dropped it gently on the grain to kind of get the hang of the affair before he began in earnest.

Then he swung it up over his head and began thrashing for all he was worth.

The first blow caved in four ribs of a horse that was standing by, the second knocked off Peter's hat and cracked the farmer on the elbow so hard, that his crazy-bone sung Yankee Doodle for five minutes afterward, and the

third—well, the third caromed on Peter's nose, and knocked him down as neatly as if he had been slapped in the nasal region by a base-ball club.

The old farmer yanked Peppergrass to his feet, jammed his hat on his head, and escorted him to the barn door with the remark that, "'Tain't best to fool with things yer kain't handle."

Peter thought so himself, and went and took a long walk.

His proboscis, where he had been struck by the flail, swelled up until it looked like a ripe cucumber, and for a time Peppergrass communed with his thoughts and looked sad.

But not for long was he cast down, for catching sight of the hired man driving a yoke of steers in front of a two-wheeled cart, he brightened up at once.

If there was anything that Peppergrass knew more about than another, it was driving an ox-team—that is, he imagined he did.

"Here, my man," he shouted, "just let me take hold of that whip and I'll show you how those steers ought to be managed."

The hired man said he "reckoned he knew his business;" but Peter wouldn't have it. He was going to show that hired man how to manage an ox-team, or know the reason why.

The hired man finally gave in.

He saw that Peppergrass would probably discharge him if he didn't; and he did not care to lose his job over a trifle of that sort.

So he gave in with a grin that might have meant something, and again it might not.

The steers were only two years old, and not very well broken, and the thoughtful driver had a rope on the horns of the nigh animal to guide them by.

He handed the end of the rope and the whip to Peter, and then the circus began.

And a fine new circus it was!

Peppergrass climbed up into the ox-cart, grasped the rope tightly, then flourished the whip around and yelled:

"Whoa! haw! gee! Get up, here!" and away dashed the steers.

They naturally supposed a lunatic asylum had broken loose in the cart behind them, and the way they rapid-transited around the Hayseed ranch, was a caution to greased lightning.

They hadn't gone more than a dozen rods before Peppergrass was sitting down in the bottom of the cart howling, for at every jump of the steers the cart bounded up four feet in the air, and came down with a jar that caused Peter's spine to curl up like a wilted cabbage-leaf, and his teeth to rattle like hailstones on a tin roof.

He dropped the rope and the whip, and clung to the bottom of the cart for dear life, while his high hat gradually but surely settled down over his eyes, and his collar rose up and obscured his ears.

And still that cart bounced and jounced along in its wild and erratic career.

First one wheel would be in the air, then the other. One moment the cart would be bounding over a stone, then it would plunge into a ditch with a concussion like a pile-driver.

Peppergrass was having an extremely in-

teresting little ride; and he was enjoying himself first-rate.

Oh! yes; Peter was having an intensely comic time of it; but it was noticed that he didn't pay much attention to the scenery along the route. His time was chiefly occupied in hanging onto the cart, and howling to the steers to stop—whenever he could scare up enough breath to howl with, which wasn't very often. But those steers had got waked up, and they didn't pay much attention to Peppergrass's frantic entreaties.

On the contrary, the louder he yelled the faster they went, helter-skelter across the fields, apparently imagining that Peter was encouraging them to greater efforts, and they were anxious to please him.

But a circus can't last forever, and this one didn't.

The steers finally stopped.

One reason why they stopped was because there was a stone wall in the way.

The tongue of the cart struck the wall with a terrific slam, bringing the vehicle to a sudden halt; Peppergrass took a flying leap, head foremost, over the heads of the steers into the next field.

He alighted on his hands and feet, plowed up a rod or so of ground with his nose, tore the skin off the palms of his hands, and bruised himself generally in a way that caused him to remember his exploit for some time afterward.

Then, as soon as Peter got on his feet again, the hired man came along, as mad as a wet hen, and chased him out of the field with the ox-whip, for letting the steers run away.

Peter made a good race of it, and as he cleared the fence at the other end of the field, the hired man yelled after him that if he ever came fooling around him again he would casually break his good-for-nothing neck.

Peppergrass didn't seem to care very much about the hired man's society after that. And he didn't attempt to drive any more steers, either, during his sojourn at the Hayseed Plantation.

#### CHAPTER IV.

PETER'S WATCH DOG MATINEE—HIS FIRST VISIT TO THE SQUASHVILLE POST-OFFICE—ENCOUNTER WITH A BOY WHO GUNNED FORFLIES.

PEPPERGRASS kept remarkably quiet—for him—the rest of the day.

He thought, perhaps, Farmer Hayseed and the hired man could get along for a spell without his valuable assistance.

Besides he wanted a chance to recuperate and brace up.

His energies were flagging.

Somehow there wasn't such an air of restful quiet and somnolent calmness about life in the country as he had supposed; but he concluded to lay off and take matters easy the rest of the day, at any rate, and get thoroughly refreshed and rested.

So he got a book out of his carpet-sack—a pleasing little love-story, entitled "The Baron's Red-Headed Niece; or, The Web-footed Governess of Manor Hall"—and laid himself down under the shade of an apple-tree near the farm-house to read and enjoy the cooling breezes.

He read four pages by actual count.  
Then he fell asleep.

That is what the book was intended for, principally.

It was warranted to put one to sleep inside of fifteen minutes or money refunded.

It worked like a charm in Peter's case, did "The Web-footed Governess of Manor Hall."

He slept right through till the supper-bell rung, and the hired man came along and caught a sight of him peacefully snoring away like a steam saw-mill in full blast.

Said individual did not think such an awful sight of Peppergrass, as the reader is already aware, so he thought it would be a good plan to play a trick on him and wake him up at the same time.

He waited till the family had got seated at the supper-table, then he called the watch-dog from the wood shed and requested him to "bring that tramp out from under the tree," pointing to the sleeping Peppergrass.

The dog wagged his tail and started off as if he understood exactly what was wanted of him.

Then the hired man slipped in and took his place at the table with a face on him as long as a fence-rail, and a look on it as innocent and devoid of guile as Bret Harte's Chinaman.

The next instant there was a wild yell and a burried clatter of feet, and Peppergrass came plunging headlong into the dining-room, with his eyes bulging out and the watch-dog hanging to his coat-tails like the King of Terrors to a deceased African.

He charged wildly across the room, knocking over four chairs and nearly upsetting the table; and then he began a mad race around the apartment, bowling for help at every jump, like a pigeon-toed Celestial with a gang of hoodlums after him.

It was an impressive spectacle.

Very.

Miranda Q. Hayseed was laughing as if her young heart would break, and the rest of the family joined in—all except the hired man.

He sat there as solemn as an owl. He didn't even smile.

But that night after he got to bed, it is currently reported in Squashville that the hired man laughed so that the whole house shook from cellar to garret.

Mr. Hayseed finally got up and called off the watch-dog.

That wound up the matinee.

Peppergrass was highly indignant, and demanded to know what sort of a way that was to treat a gentleman, and a city boarder at that?

The farmer said he "reckoned the dog had made a mistake, but it wouldn't make any difference anyway, as the dog wasn't mad."

"Mad?" howled Peter; "of course the dog ain't mad! He ain't got anything to be mad a'out. It's me that's mad, and don't you forget it."

Peppergrass had read this joke in an old almanac, and he thought it was a good chance to get it off and paralyze the farmer.

But Hayseed wasn't paralyzed to any great extent.

Dum it! A mistake is a mistake," he ex-

claimed; "and I reckon the dorg knows about as much as some other peop'e. The critter took yer for a tramp, I s'pect and that's all there is of it. He'll know yer the next time, I reckon, if ye keep awake."

That was all the satisfaction Peppergrass got, and even that did not seem to satisfy him exactly.

He sat down and disposed of his supper in moody silence.

Things were not running exactly to suit him yet, but he calculated there would be a change as soon as people realized who he was.

They didn't know him. That was the trouble apparently.

But he calculated that he would have that trifling matter fixed up all right in a day or so.

In the morning he would go down to the Squashville post-office, and get a bushel or two of letters addressed to "Peter Peppergrass, Esq., " and when the natives noticed that, they would begin to realize who they had to deal with, and treat him with a little more respect.

He reckoned that would fetch them around if anything would.

So the next day Peppergrass blackened his boots, brushed his stylish clothes, arrayed himself in his high hat and ten cent cane, and after admiring himself in the glass, carelessly sauntered down to the village.

Squashville was there.

But there were no signs of a post-office to the naked eye.

Peppergrass wandered about for some time, but failed to find even a letter-box tacked to a lamp-post.

Finally he entered the blacksmith-shop, where he found a man with a leather apron on, wrestling with the hind hoof of a mule, endeavoring to nail a shoe on it. We mean on the hoof of course, not on the mule.

The man was bending over busy with his work, and Peter approached close to him in order to make him hear, and asked if he could give him any information about the location of the Squashville post-office.

Just at that moment the mule's hind leg straightened out like a flash and the blacksmith plunged headlong into Peter's stomach, knocking him sprawling on his back half-way across the shop.

"I beg yer parding, sir. Mules is mighty onsart'in critters, an' ye don't want to git too close to thar heels," said the blacksmith, apologetically, and then he added: "What was ye askin' about?"

Peppergrass crawled feebly to his feet and repeated his question.

"Post-ofcice? Bless ye, man! thar hain't none."

Peppergrass looked astonished.

"Then where do you get your mail?" he asked.

"Next grocery store above here. Git out now; I've got to shoe this critter," laconically replied the man, turning to resume his discussion with the mule.

Peter vanished in the direction of the grocery as directed.

He reached it and entered.

There was nobody in except a boy.  
The boy was very busy.

He was gunning for flies with a bean-shooter.

"Sonny, where is the postmaster?" inquired Peppergrass, with a lordly air, as if the P. M. and his assistants ought to consider it a great favor to receive a call from him, and rush to wait on him at once.

"Up to the school-house," replied the boy, going right ahead with his bean-shooting.

"What is he doing there?"

"Keeping school, I reckon," and the boy pegged away at another fly.

"I'm from New York, and I want to get my mail," said Peppergrass, impatiently.

"Well, get it. Nobody's stopped you that I know on," nonchalantly replied the boy, popping over another fly.

Then Peter's angry passions rose.

"Say, boy!" he yelled; "my name is Peter Peppergrass, and if you've got any mail for me I want you to pass it out; pretty lively, too!"

The boy waited until he had brought down another fly, then he coolly replied:

"It don't make any difference whether your name is Peppersass or Sisspepper. The letters all go in the same soap-box, back there on the counter, an' yer kin help yerself."

This was rather cool. Decidedly so, in fact.

But Peppergrass smothered his rising wrath and went to the box indicated and sorted over the letters.

He found one letter for himself—just one—and he immediately recognized the scrawling superscription.

It was his wash-woman's handwriting. She, at least, had not forgotten him. But he did not eagerly tear open the seal. It wasn't necessary. He knew the contents well enough without.

Peppergrass placed the unopened missive in his pocket; and just then the boy stopped his gunning long enough to yell:

"Say, feller; don't be carrying off any letters that don't belong to you!"

This was the worst yet.

It was also a trifle too much—so Peppergrass thought, at least.

"Boy," he said, warningly; "do you know who I am?"

"Reckon so. Yer jest told me yer name was Peppersass," chirped the boy, again getting his bean-shooter into position.

This was adding insult to injury.

Peter concluded the youth was sadly in need of a lesson in deportment—and Peter also surmised that he was just the chap to give it to him.

"Boy, I've got a good mind to give you a caning for your impudence!" he shouted, prancing around and shaking his ten-cent cane at the youth in a threatening manner.

"I reckou not," calmly uttered the youth; and then after popping away at another fly, he laid his bean-shooter down, and waltzed around from behind the counter.

The youth had finally got his dander up as Shakespeare expresses it, and he went for Peppergrass in regular rough-and-tumble style.

There was a short scuffle, several nail-kegs were upset, a box of codfish knocked off the

counter, and a pane of glass broken; then Peppergrass went sliding through the door on his back and brought up unceremoniously in the gutter.

That wound up his first visit to the post-office.

He got up and set out for the Hayseed ranch without any further ceremony, while the boy turned back into the grocery and resumed his occupation of gunning the flies.

## CHAPTER V.

PEPPERGRASS GOES TO SINGING-SCHOOL—ATTEMPTS TO PLAY THE ORGAN—AND ENCOUNTERS SOME OF HIS OLD FRIENDS—RESULT SAD FOR PETER.

STILL, Peter was not wholly crushed.

He went back to the farm-house and slicked himself up, and long before night he was chirping around as lively as usual.

That evening the old farmer hitched up and drove his daughter to singing-school, down at the village.

He invited Peppergrass to go along, and Peppergrass accepted without a moments hesitation and went along with them.

They reached the village, and Peter was duly introduced to several of the leading members of the singing school, including good old Deacon Jobbers and Bumble.

Deacon Jobbers was the manager of the singing-school and Deacon Bumble was his able assistant.

It was a regular, old-fashioned, country singing-school, where the one that sings the loudest generally gets the first prize; and when it is over the boys turn in and escort the farmers' daughters home.

Deacon Jobbers politely asked Peppergrass to participate in the proceedings.

This was Peter's chance to distinguish himself and he accepted at once of course.

The two deacons took Peppergrass in tow and escorted him to the front.

They took him up on the platform with them, and introduced him to the audience as a distinguished visitor from New York.

The platform was occupied chiefly by a desk, organ, four or five chairs and a piano stool of the three-legged variety.

Peppergrass made his best bow, imported specially for the occasion, then sat down in one of the chairs and placed his high hat carefully on the floor beside him.

Then the performance began.

Deacon Jobbers hunted up a tune and caroled a verse of it to show how it should be dished up before he allowed the audience to join in.

"Now," began the deacon, glaring wildly around over his spectacles, "we will begin the exercises," and then turning to Peter he asked: "Are you a musician, Mr. Peppergrass?"

Peter loftily acknowledged that he was.

"Will you play the organ for us, then?" was the deacon's next question, to which Peter replied that he would be only too happy.

"Our distinguished visitor from the metropolis, Peter Peppergrass, Esquire, will now claw the organ for us," said Deacon Jobbers, turning

to the audience, "while we all join in that sterling old song, beginning:

"The boy stood on the burning deck,  
Eating peanuts by the peck."

The deacon sat down and blew his nose on his red bandanna, amid a storm of applause. Then Peppergrass escorted himself to the organ, which was at the front of the platform, facing the audience.

There was quite a number of young ladies present, and Peter thought he saw a chance for making several brand-new conquests. He had been rather shy of the farmer's daughter since he made a sad failure of the milking business; but now he had an opportunity to strike out in a new field.

He couldn't possibly fail to captivate at least half a dozen blooming maidens out of the number present.

Thus reasoned Peppergrass.

And he braced up for the great undertaking before him.

He smiled like a homesick baboon up a pine-apple-tree, and began to wave his arms around and spread his fingers out for the grand send-off.

Deacon Jobbers gave the word, the audience began singing, and Peppergrass began wildly clawing over the keys, but no sound came from the organ.

Nary a sound.

Not even a solitary squeak.

The audience sung one verse.

Then they stopped and looked at Peppergrass in astonishment.

"What is the trouble, Mr. Peppergrass?" inquired Deacon Jobbers, with a look of mild amazement on his benign countenance.

"There don't appear to be any wind in the organ," explained Peter, with a very red face.

Peter was right. There wasn't any wind in the organ—and there was one youth present who knew the reason why.

He was a red-headed boy with a sleepy eye, and he had met Peppergrass before. In fact he was none other than the youth whom Peter had waked up to his sorrow when he first reached Squashville.

Deacon Bumble had delegated the fiery-haired youth aforesaid to pump the wind into the organ, and the boy had solemnly winked his left eye and started into the anteroom to perform the job, with the result noted.

"Deacon Bumble, will you wake up that boy and make him tend to his business?" roared Deacon Jobbers, turning to his assistant, as the silence began to grow oppressive.

Bumble said he would try it, and arising vanished into the anteroom. When he got there the boy was pumping away as if his life depended on it, and fairly making things hum.

Deacon Bumble returned and announced that everything was now all right.

So the head deacon gave the word to go ahead again.

The singers chirped for all they were worth, and Peppergrass began to claw.

The organ worked all right for about three minutes or thereabouts.

Then the wind suddenly dropped out of it again, and the music ceased.

Peppergrass stopped clawing and looked around with a pained expression on his face. Could it be possible that some one was playing a trick on him? He hated to believe it, but the circumstances looked mighty suspicious.

The audience began to realize the joke and they stopped singing and began to roar and scream with laughter.

Peter shrunk down and tried to hide his blushes behind his seven story collar, while the chief deacon pounded on the desk with his bass-wood tuning-fork, and endeavored to bring the meeting to order.

After the tumult had somewhat subsided, Deacon Jobbers again requested his assistant to step into the anteroom and see what the trouble with the pumpist was, and Deacon Bumble meekly complied.

"Boy's gone," he laconically announced, as he returned a moment later.

"Then you'll have to take his place, and be sure to pump it up lively, brother Bumble," said Jobbers.

Deacon Bumble departed on his mission.

A moment later there floated out from the anteroom a startling series of groans, puffs and sighs.

Bumble was rather fleshy and short-winded, and the exercise was too much for him.

He was "pumping it up lively," as requested, and puffing away like a steam-jackass under full pressure.

Peppergrass struck up a tune, but the deacon's unique accompaniment from the anteroom rather marred the effect of his efforts.

Half of the audience sung and the other half laughed, and in that way the tune was brought to a close.

But Peter had finally succeeded in playing one tune through, and he naturally felt puffed up and proud.

Boisterous applause followed its conclusion and Peppergrass got up to bow his thanks to the audience.

He made several low bows, and flourished his hands around like a frightened hen trying to fly over a picket-fence, and was about to say something when a bean struck him square on the end of the nose (it seems that the boy with the bean shooter was also present) and he stepped back abruptly, fell backward over a chair, and sat down unexpectedly on the floor with a concussion that shook the whole building.

Then the audience roared in earnest.

The females stuffed their handkerchiefs in their mouths, while the young men got up and hurrahed and yelled for Peppergrass.

They wanted him to come forward and make a speech.

But Peppergrass was *non est*. That is, he wasn't *non est* just then—but he was about two seconds later.

He quickly scrambled to a perpendicular, hastily seized his stovepipe hat, and the next instant he had galloped down the aisle and out of the door, and struck a bee-line for the Hayseed ranch.

Peter didn't wait to ride with the farmer and his daughter. He didn't care for any society just then.

He merely wanted to get away from that

singing-school as expeditiously as possible. And he did it! He took a short cut across lots and in less than half an hour he was in the seclusion of his room at the Hayseed mansion, brushing the dust off his high hat and communing with his thoughts, which were not of the pleasantest description as can readily be imagined.

#### CHAPTER VI.

PETER HIRES A "FAST HORSE"—TRIES A BRUSH ON THE ROAD—HORSE FALLS ASLEEP; THEN PETER INTERVIEWS THE HORSE'S OWNER AND A BOY.

PETER'S next exploit was something entirely different.

He chartered a fast horse and went out on the road to show off. That is, the man he hired it of told Peppergrass it was a fast horse and he took his word for it.

The man kept a small hotel in Squashville, and Peppergrass knew he wouldn't deceive him—especially about a thing of that kind. Hotel-keepers never do.

Well, Peppergrass finally got out on the road with his alleged trotter, and started in to enjoy himself.

For a time he jogged leisurely along, with his plug hat cocked back on his head at an angle of forty-five degrees, and a self-satisfied smile on his countenance.

Peter looked like a pretty rapid citizen, just then. He felt that the eyes of the whole neighborhood must be fixed upon him in admiration, and he mentally calculated the country people around there would begin to have a little more respect for him when they saw him thus equipped, and realized that he was no ordinary citizen.

He also reckoned that he could astonish the first man that came along, with a burst of speed that nobody except a New Yorker could get out of a trotting horse.

Peter attempted it.

The first man that came along was an old granger, with a span of scurvy-looking gray nags hitched to a Democrat wagon.

Peppergrass waited until he got alongside, then he touched up his fast trotter.

For a second Peter shot ahead.

Then the old granger yelled:

"Git up, Jake and Bill!" and the next minute the grays dashed past Peppergrass and his fast rig like a whirlwind out for recess, and vanished in a cloud of dust.

Peppergrass gazed after them in amazement. He was somewhat surprised.

The hired trotter wasn't panning out according to his expectations, exactly.

"By Jinks!" he exclaimed; "that countryman must have a mighty fast team."

But Peter hadn't lost faith in his fast stepper yet, and he jogged quietly along for half a mile more, on the lookout for adventure.

Then he came up behind a tow-headed youngster, who was driving a bony-looking skeleton of a horse in front of a buck-board wagon.

This was Peter's chance.

"Now," he mused, "I'll make that boy's eyes stick out in about three seconds," then with a flourish of his whip, he ranged up alongside of the buck-board.

"Come on, sonny!" he yelled, as with a crack of the lash he sailed past—and sonny did come on! At least sonny didn't; but his horse did.

What sonny did was to rise up, lean over the dash-board, and emit a yell like a Choctaw, at the same time biting his fiery, untamed steed a resounding slap with the end of the reins.

That was all. But that traveling bone-yard immediately got up and dusted past Peppergrass's fast trotter like a train of cars on a down grade.

Again was Peppergrass astonished.

The boy reined in after he was a safe distance ahead, and yelled:

"Come on, sonny! Reckon 'Old Lightning' is good for another brush!"

But Peter didn't accept the invitation. He wasn't anxious for another brush just then.

The confidence he had reposed in his chartered trotter was forever gone.

He merely requested the tow-headed youth to go to a summer resort that we wouldn't mention in full by its right name for fifteen cents, cash in advance, and then he got his fast rig turned around and started back to Squashville.

Peppergrass didn't race with anybody on the way back.

He had all he could do to keep the horse from laying down and going to sleep in the middle of the road.

After four hours of hard labor he finally got the valuable trotter back within sight of Squashville.

By the time Peppergrass reached the hotel, he had worked himself up to a fearful pitch of indignation.

That hotel-keeper would be lucky to escape with his life.

Peppergrass halted the funeral procession in front of the hotel, and dismounted.

The proprietor came out with a beaming smile.

Then Peppergrass turned himself loose.

"What do you mean by hiring me this horse for a trotter, you scoundrel?" he roared, indignantly.

"Softly, softly, my son; don't say anything that I shall have to thrash you for," warned the proprietor. "Now, I claim I never said a word about trotting, and you can't prove that I did."

Peppergrass cooled down at once.

"I don't know as you used the word trotting, but anyhow you said it was a *fast horse*," he replied.

"You haven't got the story straight yet," went on the hotel-keeper, with a grin. "The animal was tied up to the hitching-post in front of my place, and you came along and asked me if it was *fast*, and I said, 'Yes, of course;' and so it was—*fast to the post*."

Peter saw the hotel-keeper had the best of it; still he wasn't inclined to let the matter drop.

"I've got a mind to sue you for the five dollars I paid you. That horse can't go ten rods off a walk," howled Peppergrass, beginning to get his mad up again as he thought of the way the country nags had passed him.

"Great Cæsar!" groaned the hotel-keeper.

"You don't mean to say you've been driving the horse off a walk, do you? Do you know, I

wouldn't have that horse trot or run or get excited over anything for fifty dollars!"

That settled Peppergrass.

He lit out without waiting to discuss the matter any further.

He wasn't sure, if he waited much longer, but what the hotel-keeper would commence proceedings against him for the value of the horse.

Therefore Peter set out for the Hayseed summer resort with all possible dispatch.

Peter wasn't feeling very good over the "fast" horse "sell."

It was a pretty bad sell to be worked off on a city youth, and that is what made Peter mad.

To think he should get fooled like that! Well, he resolved to get square with somebody.

And pretty soon he had a chance.

As he was walking along toward his boarding-place, he happened to meet the tow-headed youth and "Old Lightning" on their return trip.

The boy wasn't more than half as big as he was, so Peter thought it would be a good plan to chastise him and teach him how to behave toward his superiors.

"Hold on, bub. I'd like to speak to you," said Peter as the buck-board came up alongside.

The boy reined in his ancient but lively nag, and told Peppergrass "if he wanted anything of him to yawp it right out, as he was in a hurry to get home."

"Bub," proclaimed Peppergrass, "you the same as insulted me awhile ago when I tried to pass your old go-cart, and now I'm going to haul you off your perch and wipe up the ground with you! I'm from the city, and—"

That was as far as Peppergrass got in his little speech. Just at that juncture the tow-headed youth rose up like a flash, knocked Peter's high hat across the road with one hand, and gave him a belt under the eye with the other that sent him sprawling in the dust. Then the boy emitted another Indian yell, and Old Lightning started down the road on a gallop.

By the time Peter had got up and found his hat and cane, Old Lightning and the buck board and the tow-headed youth were out of sight around a bend in the highway. But Peter didn't follow them up. His principal anxiety just then seemed to be to cover ground in the other direction. And he did it.

## CHAPTER VII.

PETER REFLECTS A FEW—THEN HE GOES GUNNING—MEETS THE HIRED MAN AND SOME WILD TURKEYS.

PEPPERGRASS went back to the Hayseed hacienda and sat down on the front piazza to rest and reflect.

Country life was a far more exciting affair than he had expected, and Peppergrass was not enjoying his vacation as much as he thought he would. This was sad; but we don't know as he had any one to blame for it except himself.

However, Peter never stopped to think of this. All his mishaps thus far he attributed to the perverseness and unaccountable combative-ness of the people whom he had encountered. They didn't seem to understand his ways yet, so he thought maybe it would be a good idea to

keep out of their society for a day or so and devote his time to the sports that abounded in the neighborhood.

That afternoon, in pursuance of this plan, he borrowed farmer Hayseed's old-fashioned, muzzle-loading shot-gun and sallied forth in pursuit of game.

The farmer had informed him that he would find plenty of game of all kinds "up around the p'int of the woods," so Peppergrass "p'nted" in that direction.

Nimrod of old was a mighty hunter, so history tells us, and Peppergrass was another—let him tell it. He allowed there wasn't anything with legs or wings that could get away from him when he was located behind a double-barreled shot-gun ready for business.

Possibly there wasn't; but if so, the game in question must have been old and blind, and more or less crippled to start with. For, to say the least, Peter's style of handling the borrowed shot-gun, with which he was equipped, was not very sportsman-like.

He got his legs tangled up with the barrel of the shot-gun and fell down half a dozen times before he reached the "p'int of woods" for which he was making; and once or twice when he tripped himself up with the gun it went off unexpectedly, and it began to look as though Peter would be called upon to attend his own funeral pretty soon, if he wasn't careful.

However, he finally reached the hunting-grounds without any fatal accidents resulting from his carelessness, and then he proceeded to hunt.

It would have made a cow laugh right out loud to witness such hunting as took place in that "p'int of woods" that summer afternoon—that is, if the cow wasn't afraid of being shot by mistake for a chipmunk. On the whole, I guess it probably wouldn't have been any laughing matter for the cow if she had happened to stray along in that direction just then. Peppergrass would have bagged her, sure. A cow would have been just about the size of game he could hit, and he would want to stand up pretty close to her at that.

Unfortunately for Peppergrass, but luckily for the cow, no bovine happened along, and he blazed away among the trees the most of the afternoon without securing any game.

He was about to give it up in disgust, when Mr. Hayseed's hired man, who had been attracted by the firing, came along and asked Peter what success he was having.

Peppergrass and the hired man were not on very good terms yet, so he evasively replied that he guessed it didn't make any difference to anybody except himself; he was only hunting for fun, anyway.

But the hired man was not to be put off in that way. He told Peter he hated to see him go back to the house without anything in his bag when the woods and fields were running over with game, and he offered to show Peter where there was any quantity of easily-bagged game if he would only come with him.

Peter began to think the hired man wasn't such a bad fellow after all, and he thanked him for his kind offer and gladly accepted the invitation,

They set out together and the hired man conducted him through the woods for some distance. They finally came to the edge of a clearing of about an acre or so in extent, and then the hired man exultantly informed Peppergrass that he had sighted game at last, and he pointed triumphantly to a flock of turkeys strutting around the cleared ground.

"What are they?" whispered Peppergrass, excitedly.

"Wild turkeys," was the reply.

"You don't say! Look about the same as tame ones, don't they?"

"Yes; only bigger and plumper. A couple of them would make a fine present for Mr. Hayseed to repay him for lending you his gun. Take it cool and aim low when you shoot. I'll get back out of sight so as not to scare the birds," and the wily hired man stepped back cautiously behind some bushes and tip-toed along until he got out of hearing, then he suddenly broke into a run and made the best time on record—that is for a hired man—in the direction of farmer Hayseed's.

Peppergrass, intent on securing some of those "wild turkeys," did not notice his disappearance.

The gun was already loaded, but in his excitement Peppergrass hastily rammed another heavy charge in each barrel, then drew it up to his shoulder, rapidly squinted over it in the direction of the "game" and blazed away with both barrels at once.

The execution was something terrific—at both ends of the gun.

Four of those turkeys laid right down and chirped their death-song at the report of that weapon, and at the same time the charge caused the gun to recoil with the force of an able-bodied pile-driver, nearly dislocating Peter's shoulder and knocking him backward among the bushes, where he lay hugging that shooting-iron and feebly gasping for breath.

When he came to, he found a man standing over him with a club. It was the owner of those turkeys, and he told Peppergrass he could take his choice; hand over a dollar each for the turkeys he had killed, go to jail, or have his head clubbed off, he didn't care which.

The fallen sportsman got up and promptly handed over the assessed damages to the excited granger, and then he sneaked away with the empty gun under his arm looking about as cheap and crestfallen as it was possible for a youth of Peter's dignity to look.

Again had Peppergrass been scooped in and done for.

## CHAPTER VIII.

PETER GOES OFF IN SEARCH OF A QUIET NOOK—GETS CHASED BY A MALE COW, HAS HIS NOSE PULLED, ETC., ETC.—FAILS TO FIND THE NOOK.

THE next day Peppergrass felt like going off into some quiet nook and communing with himself.

He did not care for any company.

So he struck out across the fields for a walk.

He walked across half a dozen lots, and was just climbing over a fence, when a rough voice hailed him:

"Hey, mister! Better not get over in that field."

Peppergrass glanced around, and found the person who had addressed him was a young man at work in a field of grain.

Peter was not very well pleased with the tone he had used, so he looked rebukingly at the young man, and sarcastically asked him if he owned the field in question.

The young man said he didn't; but there was a bull in the field that wasn't very fond of strangers, and he thought perhaps it would be safer for him to go around.

Peppergrass was instantly relieved.

"Oh! is *that* all? Well, don't worry yourself, young man; I calculate I've seen plenty of cattle before now," said Peppergrass, with a lofty wave of his hand, as he proceeded to climb over the fence and continue his journey across the field.

Peter had read somewhere that no animal would attack a man when looked steadily in the eye, and in case he had any trouble, he meant to try it.

He reckoned there wasn't any animal that could out-squint him.

There were three or four cows and a short-horn Taurus (Taurus is the gentleman cow) feeding on the grass in the middle of the field.

But Peter paid no attention to them.

He knew the young man over in the next field was watching him, and he put on a regular Fifth avenue gait, with his head up in the air like a wild turkey, and his ten-cent cane swinging about his legs.

Thus airily strode Peter along until he was about two-thirds of the way across the field.

Then the short-horn caught a sight of Peter's gorgeously checked suit, and he began to paw up the earth and bellow.

The animal was apparently as mad as if somebody had shaken a red rag at him, or had fooled him on a bran mash made of sawdust.

And after bellowing and pawing around for awhile, he started in pursuit of the gaudily attired youth.

Peppergrass heard the bull coming, and then he thought it was about time to dust off his gazing-into-the-animal's-eye theory, and get it in working order.

He proceeded to do so.

He turned around and struck an Ajax-defying-the-lightning attitude, and glared sternly at the approaching animal.

But somehow the glare business didn't seem to work very well in that case.

The bull never weakened or faltered for an instant.

He lowered his head ready for business, and came on at a rattling pace.

Peppergrass began to grow pale.

His knees began to shake.

The next instant he had turned and was flying like a madman for the fence.

And the way that bull came bounding along after him, bellowing and shaking its head was a caution—particularly to Peppergrass.

That bull was a four-legged terror in running, but Peppergrass had five or six rods the start and he got to the fence first.

He went over it with a flying leap, and thereby saved his bacon.

But he was not very well pleased at the result of his rashness all the same.

He had come out of the field nearly at the same point he entered, and as he charged over the fence in frantic haste, the young man, who was still standing there, began to roar—actually laughed at him!

Then Peppergrass was mad.

"What are you laughing at?" he demanded.

"Laughing at you, of course; and it was enough to make a horse laugh to see the way your coat-tail stuck out behind you when you came for the fence! Ha ha-ha!" and the young man went off in another paroxysm of laughter.

"Say, young man, I don't like your style of laughing at people," said Peppergrass, sternly.

"No; I suppose not. Then don't make a fool of yourself the next time. Ha-ha-ha!" and again the young man smiled in his free-and-easy way.

"Insulted again, by Jingo!" exclaimed Peter, grasping his cane tighter and starting in the direction of the young man.

The young man casually remarked that it was his busy day, but he didn't mind taking a few moments recreation seeing that Peppergrass insisted on it.

Then he laid down his cane and taking Peter by the nose he backed him up against the fence, and twisted his spine, curving up in the shape of the letter Z, and cheerfully belted him a couple of times in the ear; and then he let up on him and requested him to travel or he would break his back for him in short order.

Peter traveled.

Somehow the climate right around there did not seem to agree with his delicate constitution, and he thought perhaps a change of scenery would do him good.

So he left—mighty expeditiously, too.

Peter wasn't over four hours getting into the next field, and this time he was careful to select a field which didn't contain any dangerous young men or animals.

He walked along pretty rapidly for some time.

Then he came to a pond—a nice clear pond with willows on the bank, and a small skiff anchored on its surface.

This, Peppergrass thought must be Farmer Hayseed's pond which he had told him about.

He was rather warm from the violent exercise he had recently undergone, so he thought he would go in swimming and cool off, before he returned to his room in the Hayseed domicile.

## CHAPTER IX.

PEPPERGRASS GOES IN BATHING—GETS INTO AN AWFUL DILEMMA—MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF HIS CLOTHES—HE PROMENADES TO HIS BOARDING-HOUSE IN A BORROWED HORSE BLANKET.

PEPPERGRASS disrobed and plunged into the inviting pond. He had learned to swim in his early boyhood, and he hadn't forgot how yet.

There was no one in sight, the water was just right, and Peppergrass thought he would sport around in the pond for an hour or so and enjoy himself and keep cool at the same time.

He paddled around for a few minutes, then he swam clear across the pond, waded ashore and walked up in the bushes a ways to exercise and stretch his limbs before he made the return trip to the other side of the pond where he had left his clothes.

This was a sad move for Peppergrass. He had scarcely got out of sight in the bushes before a party of young ladies came innocently strolling along and seated themselves on a fallen tree at the edge of the water right in front of Peppergrass's place of concealment.

When he discovered them he nearly fainted. It was an awful situation for a young man to be placed in—especially a young man of Peter's inimitable dignity and importance.

To get into the pond and swim across now was out of the question, and it was impossible to walk around the pond and secure his clothes without being discovered by that bevy of youthful females.

No; Peppergrass was in for it.

The only thing to be done was to remain in hiding and wait for those young ladies to go away. But would they ever go? This was the all-important question that Peppergrass asked himself for the fiftieth time that warm afternoon, as he squatted behind a clump of bushes and suffered untold tortures from the blazing sun on his back, and the maddening stings of gadflies, mosquitoes and other insects; and still those young ladies sat there and chatted and laughed, while Peppergrass fumed, and writhed, and perspired, and even wished he were dead—or those heartless females would go away, he wasn't very particular which.

Enjoying himself? Oh, yes! Peppergrass was having an intensely comic time of it! If he had been loaded down with chains and flung into the deepest dungeon beneath the castle walls, wherever that is, he couldn't have felt much better. In fact he would have felt about the same. There wasn't much of a choice between the two situations; only if he were in the dungeon he might have stood some show of getting out sooner than from his present position.

Two mortal hours passed, and still those girls unconsciously chatted on, while poor Peppergrass crouched there in the same position covered with perspiration and gadflies. It began to look as if Eternity might possibly roll around in that direction before those young ladies withdrew, and gave Peppergrass a chance to dash out from his ambush and secure his dry-goods.

But it didn't.

Those females were a long time getting started, but they didn't wait quite as long as that to go.

They finally rose up and drifted away to their homes about an hour before sunset; and when the last bit of calico had disappeared behind the distant trees, Peter was so relieved that he got up and yelled, and hurrahed, and tried to turn a handspring, but only succeeded in jamming his head in the sand and nearly breaking his neck in the operation.

Then he got up again and plunged in the pond to scare the mosquitoes and other insects off from his back where they had been holding a picnic for the last three hours or more.

There was a grateful coolness to the water after the broiling he had undergone in the sun that afternoon while waiting for those giddy, thoughtless females to disperse, and Peter was tempted to linger for some time longer in the pond and get thoroughly cooled off.

But the setting sun presently warned him that it was getting about time to assume his drapery and make tracks in the direction of his boarding-house.

So he waded ashore and set out for the spot, where he had left his checked suit and other dry goods. He reached it, and—horrible discovery—there were no clothes there!

Oh, fateful day! Peppergrass was having a hard time of it.

He staggered weakly back against a tree and struggled with his overpowering emotions for a moment.

It was tough, mighty tough. That was the only suit of clothes Peter had with him, and besides he couldn't get another until that was paid for.

A look of intense sadness and disgust slowly settled down on Peter's countenance, and bitter reflections crowded his mind. Could it be that those young ladies had discovered his clothes and walked off with them? No; they had gone in another direction, and he had watched them out of sight. It could not therefore have been the young ladies who had sequestered his raiment.

It must have been some snooping scoundrel of the masculine persuasion who had committed the dastardly deed, and as Peppergrass ruminated on the circumstance he vowed an awful vow that, if he only knew the name of the villain in question and could borrow a linen duster and a club he would start in pursuit and chase the cowardly fiend to the uttermost ends of the earth but what he would catch him and make him disgorge that suit of clothes.

Peppergrass was getting excited. But it did not seem to do him much good. In the first place there was no club handy that he could get hold of, and in the second place and lastly there was no chance to borrow anything to wear right around in that immediate vicinity.

Peppergrass was in a bad fix.

This was worse than being cornered up by the girls. So Peppergrass thought—and he was right.

He could not very well return to his boarding-house at the Hayseed ranch clothed in nothing but sunburn and mosquito-bites. Such a course would be apt to excite comment in case he should meet anybody, and Peter decided not to try it.

The only thing to do was to wait till after dark, then sneak up to some barn, secure a horse-blanket and dash home before he was noticed.

In pursuance of this plan, as soon as it became dark enough, he stole out from the shelter of the bushes that fringed the pond and approached a barn in the neighborhood.

Entering the building he hunted around until he found a horse-blanket. Folding it gracefully around his manly form, he was about to steal quietly away, when the owner of the premises unexpectedly put in an appearance, and for a

moment that barn was full of excitement and commotion and dust, at the expiration of which time Peppergrass came flying out of the door again, minus that horse-blanket, and dashed wildly away across the fields in the darkness followed by an excited farmer with a pitchfork.

The farmer lost sight of Peppergrass before he had gone a dozen rods, and gave up the chase in disgust, and returned to the house and told his folks that he had just discovered a wild man of the woods or a *What-is-it*, he wasn't certain which, out in the barn, and that after a fearful struggle with the stray conundrum, he had chased it a full mile across the country with a pitchfork, but the critter, whatever it was, had finally succeeded in getting away from him and disappeared in the darkness.

The granger's family listened to his tale in wondering awe, and they double-locked every door in the house before they retired that night for fear the terrible "wild man" might return and carry them all off in their slumbers.

In the mean time where was the unfortunate Peppergrass?

After he escaped from the agitated granger and his pitchfork, he was a trifle more careful and he approached the next barn that came in his way somewhat more cautiously. While he was reconnoitering around behind the barnyard fence he saw a man enter the building. It was a farmer finishing up his chores for the night. To him Peppergrass gave the grand hailing sign of distress, and after attracting his attention related his sad tale of woe.

He proved a good Samaritan in disguise, and he cheerfully loaned Peppergrass a pair of cow-hide boots and an old horse-blanket, and sent him on his way rejoicing.

That is figuratively speaking. In reality Peter didn't rejoice enough to render that fact visible to the naked eye. The fact was that Peter was not feeling desperately cheerful just at that moment.

His feet were sore, his limbs were stiff and his back felt as if it had been scorched by a prairie fire. In short he was bunged up, crippled, cold, tired, hungry and disgusted—and he wasn't feeling very well besides.

Slowly and sadly he made his way, under the friendly shades of night and that horse-blanket, to the Hayseed mansion. Then watching his opportunity, after they had all retired, he crept softly to his room, divesting himself of the accommodating farmer's boots and horse-blanket, then plunged into bed and lay awake the rest of the night wondering where he was going to get another suit of clothes, and how it was possible for a square yard or so of sunburn and a few mosquito-bites and other insect-stings to make a fellow's back feel so confounded uncomfortable.

It was a long, weary night for Peppergrass.

#### CHAPTER X.

PEPPERGRASS RECOVERS HIS DRY-GOODS—GOES TO A NECKTIE SOCIABLE—HIS BASHFUL PARTNER.

You can wager your final nickel that Peter was rejoiced to see daylight dawn at last the next morning.

Anything was better than lying awake in bed, wrestling with unpleasant thoughts and wishing that some one else had his back.

Daylight and the old farmer dawned at about the same time. That was a way they had. Mr. Hayseed always got up with the sun and after milking the cows usually took a short recess out in the back yard splitting up the family firewood.

When Peppergrass heard him at his morning exercise, he cautiously stuck his head out of the window and requested Mr. Hayseed to please hand up some clothes on the end of a pole so he could rig himself up and come down and get something to eat.

The farmer looked up in surprise.

"Oh! ye're *there*, air ye?" he asked.

"Yes, of course," replied Peppergrass; "where did you imagine I was?"

"Drowned, by gum!" exclaimed Hayseed.

"Who said so?" asked Pete.

"Jake Shinglewhacker. He chanced along by the pond and run acrost yer clothes, and he brung 'em up here and said as how he reckoned that durned fule who boarded with me (Jake is a leetle keerless in his language sometimes) had gone in swimmin' and drownded bissell, and he guessed I would be out the amount of yer board bill unless the clothes was wu'th the money. Jake agreed to come down after breakfast this morning and we was goin' to go over and drag the pond and git you out and have the coroner come and set on you. Shinglewhacker must have made a mistake. Anyhow I'm mighty glad to see ye alive again. That checkered suit of yours wouldn't bring much around here, and I thought sure I was going to lose money on ye."

Peppergrass's clothes which were yet tied up tightly in a bundle as they had been fixed by the thoughtful Shinglewhacker, were then passed up to him and he presently put in an appearance at the breakfast table as mad as a raging hornet and with an appetite like a thrashing-machine.

It can readily be believed that Peppergrass did not do much ranging around that day. He was not in a condition for sport or pleasure-seeking.

What he wanted just then was to remain quiet, and fill up his yawning interior with at least three square meals and give his back a chance to recuperate.

He hung around the house pretty steady all day, and busied himself chiefly with watching Miranda Q. Hayseed's graceful movements, and wondering if the fates would ever prove propitious and he would finally succeed in inducing her to look on him with favor.

The country girls so far, and the boys, too, for that matter—did not appear to regard him with the awe and reverence that he considered his due. In fact they had treated him with more or less contumely thus far, but he was still in hopes of bringing them around in the course of time, when they got further acquainted with him and began to realize who he was.

Peppergrass was not discouraged yet by a long sight; and that night when Bob Bloomer, Joe Somers and some of the other youths of the neighborhood came along, to get Hayseed's

hired man to attend a necktie party with them and asked Peter if he wouldn't like to go, too, he willingly accepted.

He hadn't the slightest idea of what a necktie party was, but he thought he would go and find out.

He found out soon after he got there.

The performance eventuated at farmer Simmons's, and everybody—and his sister—was there.

The party was inaugurated by the necktie drawing, in which there were plenty of prizes and no blanks.

A job lot of calico neckties were jumbled up in a grab-bag, then each gentleman present drew one out, which decided his fate for the time being, for he was obliged to select as a general and special partner for the evening the lady whose dress corresponded with the necktie he had drawn.

Peppergrass saw that he would be on equal terms with the rest of the young men in this arrangement, anyhow, and he secretly hoped that he would draw a tie entitling him to the prettiest girl in the room. Then he intended to sail in and exercise his powers of fascination, and show those country boys that he was as good as the best of them in that line.

However, he didn't want to be in too much of a hurry.

He waited around till the most of the young men had secured their neckties and their partners, then he boldly stepped up to the grab-bag and yanked out a necktie.

It was an immense affair with a gaudy check that compared very well with his suit; but there wasn't the slightest resemblance between it and the dress of any one of the young ladies present.

Peppergrass held it up in full view of the audience, but no young lady came forward to claim it.

Instead a general titter ran around the room.

Peppergrass began to think there must be some sell about the affair.

He looked toward Bob Bloomer for an explanation, and after a whispered consultation with some of the young ladies who were in the secret, Bob stepped forward and said:

"Very sorry, Mr. Peppergrass, but it appears the young lady that goes with your necktie is busy in the kitchen just now. We are going to have some refreshments pretty soon and you know they must be prepared by somebody. She is the best cook in the crowd so of course it fell to her lot to do it."

"Yes, I presume so. Just my luck, by jingo!" exclaimed Peppergrass. "But can't I put this necktie back and take another grab? It ain't right, you know, to dish a fellow out of the fun in this way."

"Oh! don't you worry about that," consolingly replied Bob Bloomer. "You'll have plenty of fun yet before you get through. It is against the rules to exchange neckties, but your partner will be through in the kitchen soon, and you'll have more of her on your hands than you can take care of maybe the rest of the evening."

Peppergrass said he guessed there was no danger of that, he rather imagined that he was perfectly capable of taking care of almost any

ordinary-sized young lady, provided she was passably good-looking, and he got the chance; and then he sat down contentedly in the corner to wait for his partner, the young lady who was unfortunately detained in the kitchen.

And there he sat for an hour and forty-five minutes by the chronometer, and twiddled his thumbs, and fidgeted, and yawned, and gazed vacantly around with the expression of a South American baboon that has strayed away from home and got lost, and waited for the appearance of the young lady whose drapery corresponded with that gaudy necktie.

The rest of the company seemed to be perfectly willing to let him wait.

They paid no attention to him whatever, but went right ahead with their games just as though he wasn't there.

Several times when Peppergrass got a chance he asked Bloomer if it wasn't about time that young lady turned up, to which he replied that she would be along soon.

But she didn't come, all the same; and Peter finally got disgusted clear through and was about to leave, when the company gathered around him and announced that the kitchen preparations were over at last, and his partner was waiting for him in the hall.

"Now, brace up like a man and go out and fetch her in," whispered Bob Bloomer. "She is young and bashful, and you're just the fellow to bring her out in society and show her off. Go ahead and make a 'mash' now that you've got a chance," and Bob shoved Peppergrass toward the door.

He stepped out in the hall which he found dark as midnight in Egypt. Some one evidently put out the light to bother him in his search for the bashful young lady. But Peppergrass was not to be fooled out of his game in that way. Not much. He knew a trick worth two of that.

Drawing a match from his pocket he struck it on the wall, and glanced anxiously around in search of his bashful partner.

He caught a glimpse of a dress that corresponded exactly with the necktie he had drawn. But—ye gods and little fishes!—the female who wore it was black and greasy and weighed at least two hundred pounds! In fact, she was the colored cook!

Peppergrass dropped the match and was about to beat a hasty retreat, when she plunged into his arms like an avalanche, clasped her fat, bare arms around him and planted a resounding kiss squarely on his lips.

"Lor' bress ye, honey!" she exclaimed. "Dey tolle me ye was waitin' fur me; but I couldn't git away a minet sooner, honey!" and she gently clasped Peter around his delicate waist and whirled him through the door, which some one had thoughtfully opened, right in among that expectant crowd of young folks.

The laughter and applause that greeted their appearance could have been heard over in the next county, provided anybody had been listening. And as Dinah whirled Peter around the room in a wild and reckless dance, something like a cross between a waltz and a breakdown, the yells and peals of laughter nearly raised the roof.

The cook had been a good dancer in her gay and gushing girlhood, but she had forgotten the art long since, and the principal part of the present performance consisted of yanking Peppergrass backward and forward across the room, walking all over his feet with her No. 14 cowhides, whirling him around, prancing on his feet again, dashing frantically from one end of the apartment to the other, with her arm clutched in a cast-iron embrace around his fragile form, then finally waltzing on his corns once more before she gave up exhausted, and dropped into a chair.

The moment Peppergrass felt her grasp loosen he broke away, seized his high hat and cane and made a wild dash for the door.

He reached it and slid out into the night as if he had been sent for and was in a hurry to get there.

They were going to have some refreshments pretty soon, but Peppergrass didn't wait to get any.

His appetite had suddenly failed him, and he was only anxious to get away and find some quiet nook where he could throw up his supper and commune with his thoughts without interruption.

#### CHAPTER XI.

PEPPERGRASS GOES TO BUG HOLLOW—FALLS VIOLENTLY IN LOVE—SERENADES THE OLD MAN BY MISTAKE—"PROTECTS" A YOUNG LADY.

PEPPERGRASS'S next move was away from Squashville.

He packed his carpet-sack early the next morning, paid his board-bill and left the Hayseed ranch.

He said the people around there hadn't used him just right, and he guessed he would hunt up a place where the inhabitants would appreciate his society, and treat him with becoming respect.

So he bade good-by to Mr. Hayseed, and Miranda, and the hired man, and the rest of the folks, and then shook the dust of Squashville off his pedal extremities, boarded an accommodation train and faded away in the distance like a beautiful vision.

The next station was Bug Hollow.

Peppergrass got off there, and hunted up another boarding-house.

The man who contracted to fill him up at so much per week, was an old farmer named Nubbins, who lived in the outskirts of Bug Hollow.

He was the unfortunate possessor, Nubbins was, of three ungainly daughters, who were confirmed old maids.

For the past ten years he had been trying to get rid of them without success, and it began to look as though he would be compelled to board and clothe them all their lives.

That was one reason why he accepted Peppergrass for a summer boarder. He thought he looked rather green, and it would be just like him to fall in love and elope with one of those old maids.

But Peppergrass wasn't as green as he looked—not in that direction, he wasn't.

Peter wasn't falling in love with any skinny

old maids when there were plenty of pretty young ladies around.

Bug Hollow was full of them. Peter met half a dozen the first day he landed there, and as usual he fell in love with all of them as fast as they came along.

One in particular, however, struck his fancy as being particularly lovely. Her name was Nellie Spriggins, and her father was a florist.

Peppergrass hadn't been in the place three days before he found out all about where she lived and all about her.

She had smiled at him once on the street when he bowed to her, so he fondly imagined, and now all he had to do was to follow up the lead, in mining parlance, till he struck pay dirt.

He had read a lot of high-toned nonsense about love-sick swains going out moonlight evenings with a guitar, and serenading the star-eyed daisies of their existence, and being rewarded by a sweet face appearing at the open casement and wafting a heavenly kiss through the dew-laden atmosphere to their lover bold, or something to that effect; and he thought he would try the scheme and see how it worked in Bug Hollow.

Peter didn't own a guitar, but he had his voice along with him, and he imagined he was a pretty fair grade of singer, and perhaps he would get along all right without any instrumental music.

He resolved to try it, anyway.

Pretty Nellie Spriggins was naturally the victim he selected, being the bright particular star of his fancy just at that moment.

Peppergrass waited till about nine o'clock that evening, then he sauntered forth and sought the palatial residence of the Spriggins family.

Fortunately for him—though unluckily—perhaps for others, particularly those who would have to listen to his singing—the bulldog was chained up in the barn, so he had a clear field before him.

He walked around the house until he found an upper window with a light in it. This he imagined was the boudoir of the charming Nellie, so he paused and got himself in position and prepared to sing.

Placing one hand imploringly on his heart, he extended the other at an angle of forty-five degrees, like an old-fashioned pump-handle, and then, looking upward with the expression of a three-weeks-old calf that has lost its mother, he began:

"Oh, gentle maid, come forth with me  
And wander on the beach!"

There wasn't a beach worth mentioning within thirty miles, but Peter didn't mind discrepancies of that sort. He went right on with his original love-song:

"And listen to the crickets chirp  
And hear the tree-toad screech!"

To hear the tree-toad screech! That would be a fine thing to get a young lady out of bed for at that time of night. And besides, what would be the use of it when she could lay in bed and hear him screech free gratis for nothing, without running any risk of taking cold or

catching the seven years influenza out in the damp night air? Peppergrass wasn't reasonable in his requests; however, he didn't stop to think of that, but caroled right ahead:

"Oh, fairest one, oh, seraph sweet!  
Come out beneath the moonbeam's glow,  
And list to the dulcet notes of love  
That from my heart doth flow."

Dulcet notes of love! They were dulcet, indeed—just about as dulcet as the hoarse croaking of a bull-frog, or the tuneful chirp of a buzz saw when it strikes a knot. To tell the plain, unvarnished truth, which, by the way, is the only variety we deal in, Peppergrass's singing was enough to scare the chickens off the roost and paralyze them with terror—unless said chickens happened to be deaf, dumb and blind in both feet. Peter had volunteered to sing once at the inauguration of an orphan foundry, and before he got through he had frightened all the children into convulsions, and the "Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Defenseless Orphans" were obliged to come and choke him off.

However, this did not prevent him from warbling for all he was worth on the present occasion, and he cheerfully pitched into another verse:

"Oh, sweetest maid, why slumberest thou  
When thy lover bids thee come?  
Arise and don thy fairest robes  
And—"

Well, just then something happened. The "sweetest maid" slumbered right on. (In fact her room was around on the other side of the house and she was not aware of his presence.) But her father didn't.

He arose, Mr. Spriggins did, just at that juncture, and he didn't wait to "don his fairest robes," either, but galloped right to the window and emptied the water pitcher squarely into Peter's upturned countenance, then fired a cast-iron boot-jack at him, and yelled:

"Say there, young feller! If you've got about through that infernal howling, I'd advise you to skip before I come down and sick the bull dog on you! Go back to the idiot asylum; crawl in a hole somewhere and hide; go and drown yourself; bake your head; go to thunder; go anywhere; do anything but sing! I want to sleep!" and down came the window with a slam.

And Peppergrass, where was he?

Ask of the night winds that whistled mournfully through his coat-tails as he dashed madly in the direction of Nubbins's boarding-house.

He didn't stop running till he was safe in his own room, and he didn't attempt to sing another note that evening—or in fact any other evening while he was in Bug Hollow.

Spriggins was plainly an uncultivated old sardine who had no ear for music, and Peppergrass made up his mind he wouldn't waste his talent on people who couldn't appreciate it.

Still, it was a source of deep chagrin and regret to him to think that he should have made such a fatal mistake as to get under the wrong window and serenade old Spriggins instead of his charming daughter; as he really would like to have known how she would have taken the compliment, as he considered it.

However, he was not discouraged yet, so far as she was concerned, and he meant 'o make amends for his mistake soon as he got a chance.

The opportunity he sought came the very next day. Peppergrass was out walking when he espied pretty Nellie Spriggins seated alone on a rustic seat under a shade tree on her father's grounds.

He approached and made one of his best bows. She returned it with a smile.

Peppergrass was overjoyed. The great opportunity of his life had come at last.

Seating himself on the bench at a respectful distance from her he sucked the head of his cane for awhile, then began:

"Miss Spriggins, is your father at home this afternoon?"

"No; he has gone to the city on business," was the reply.

Peppergrass was greatly relieved to hear this. He brightened up at once and went on:

"Your mother is well, I presume, Miss Spriggins?"

"Very well, thank you, Mr. Pepperhay."

"My name is Peppergrass," dignifiedly corrected Peter.

"Oh! I beg your pardon. I didn't exactly catch the last syllable of your name when I first heard it, but I knew it was hay, or grass, or something of that kind," explained the young lady. "It is such a comical name, I'm sure I'll remember it the next time."

Peppergrass did not know whether he ought to regard the latter remark as a compliment or otherwise, and it required another long spell of violent sucking on the head of his cane before he could think of anything more to say. Finally he braced up, and remarked:

"I called around to serenade you last evening, Miss Spriggins. Little ditty of my own composition I wanted you to hear; but I got under the wrong window, and I judged, from what your father said, he was not fond of vocal music, so I quit. Real sorry indeed that I made such a mistake. Did you hear about it?"

"Oh, yes—that is, not directly. I didn't know it was you, but papa said this morning at the breakfast-table he wished the authorities would chain up the stray lunatics in the place instead of allowing them to run around nights, howling and disturbing people who wanted to sleep."

Peppergrass turned red, then green, and finally purple.

"Oh, you mustn't mind what papa says," went on the young lady, innocently. "He is always saying something of that kind. He generally blurts right out what he means, without stepping to think how it is going to sound."

Peter thought, if that was the case, Mr. Spriggins would be a mighty unpleasant sort of man to be son-in-law to; but as he intended to board with the old folks free gratis after he got married, he was willing to put up with a few inconveniences.

So he stopped blushing and commenced to suck ideas out of the head of his cane again.

Presently he found one and brought it out for inspection:

"Miss Spriggins, don't you sometimes get lonesome?"

"Yes, once in awhile, when I have nothing else to do. Why do you ask?" was the artless reply.

"Oh, I thought perhaps you did," explained Peppergrass. "I imagined you perhaps felt the need of a companion in your daily rambles; a strong arm to shield you from harm, and a manly form to stand between you and all danger!" and Peppergrass moved a couple of feet closer to the young lady; then resumed his glowing discourse:

"Miss Spriggins, if you say the word, I am at your service as long as I remain in Bug Hollow. You may lean on my strong right arm, and know that you are safe from danger. Nothing in the shape of man, beast or demon shall harm your shrinking, tender form. No, never, while this stalwart arm is near to protect and—"

Just then a peaceable old cow that had been feeding unnoticed about the grounds came straying along behind the rustic seat on which the shrinking Nellie and the bold, daring Peppergrass were seated. The animal paused when within about four feet of the bench, immediately behind the brave and warlike Peppergrass, raised her head to a level with his shoulder-blades, and gave vent to a terrific, resounding "moo-oo-oo-oo!" that fairly made the ground tremble.

Peppergrass gave one startled glance behind him, gasped: "Good heavens! another mad bull!" then scrambled hastily to his feet and dashed frantically away.

He never slackened his speed nor even looked back to see what had become of Miss Spriggins till he had placed a wire-rail fence between himself and that ferocious animal.

Then he ventured to turn around, and—well, he saw that ancient heifer placidly feeding on the grass while the shrinking, lonesome young lady to whom he had tendered his valuable services as a protector, was leaning back on the rustic seat convulsed with laughter.

Peppergrass didn't go back and offer to protect her some more. He thought perhaps she didn't need it, so he quietly and unostentatiously came away.

## CHAPTER XII.

PEPPERGRASS TAKES IN A PICNIC—HAS DEAD LOADS OF FUN—AND PICKS UP A RAGING HORNETS' NEST ON HIS WAY HOME.

PETER'S next attempt to distinguish himself did not occur until a day or so later.

It was at a picnic that the solemn affair took place.

The young folks of Bug Hollow got up the picnic, and of course the three Nubbins females had to go; they always went wherever there was a likelihood of seeing a man, as it stood them in hand to neglect no chance that might offer for committing matrimony.

They attended the festivities in full force, and took Peppergrass along as chaperon.

He didn't care for their society, particularly, but he gladly consented to go, thinking that it

would afford him an opportunity to branch out and show the young ladies and especially the susceptible portion of the Bug Hollow females —what he could do.

And when he got there, he *did* branch out—amazingly.

His first performance was to sit down in a basket of victuals, and mash a half dozen custard pies, four strawberry shortcakes, a pan of biscuits, and a couple jelly-cakes into chaos.

He got up, apologized and retired behind a tree to scrape the custard, etc., off the rear piazza of his pants; and then as soon as he came out, he stumbled over a root and jammed his head in the stomach of a fat man, doubling the old fellow up like a dose of early cucumbers—and served the old chap right, too, for he had no business to be there among the young folks! Then when Peppergrass helped the ancient interloper to his feet, and attempted to apologize, he stepped backward right on the trail of the best-looking young lady present and ripped a hole seven yards long in her dress. And it took half a dozen young ladies and all the pins they could muster to make the young lady with the rip presentable again, and she called him an "awful, horrid man," and wouldn't look at Peppergrass again during the whole day.

He was getting along famously, Peppergrass was.

Oh, yes, he was doing nobly; and he began to feel that the man who invented picnics was the boss benefactor of mankind—and he wished he had him out there behind a tree in some sequestered nook, where he could lam blazes out of him.

But the chances are that he wouldn't have done it, even if he had the man just where he wanted him. The plan might not have worked as well with the man present as it did in his imagination—anyway, he tried it on another fellow and found it didn't work very satisfactorily.

The other fellow was a thoughtless young man, who jeered at Peter's awkward mishaps and even had the audacity to smile right out loud when he had the collision with the fat man, and then backed up and got on more trails in half a minute than a Sioux warrior sometimes does in all day.

This naturally excited Peter's wrath, and he thought it would be a good plan to coax the young fellow away to some retired spot and gently, but peremptorily, tweak his nose for him.

He mentioned the matter to the young man, who came right along without any urging.

When he had got him just where he wanted him, Peppergrass attempted to carry his belligerent plan into effect.

He squared himself up in front of the young fellow who had excited his anger, and casually reached for his nose, and—well, an hour later, Peppergrass began to feel almost well enough to again join in the picnic festivities. His nose had stopped bleeding, and although one eye had a mansard-roof over it and the other was somewhat swollen and bruised, he could see nearly as well as ever; and after skirmishing around and ascertaining that the young fellow whose nose he didn't pull had disappeared (probably

under the impression that he had committed manslaughter), Peppergrass rejoined the picnic party, and explained that he had received his injuries from falling down an embankment while in pursuit of wild flowers.

Some of the crowd asked Peter what he had done with the flowers, and he replied that he had slipped and fallen just before he reached them. Then some of them kindly volunteered to go along with Peppergrass and secure those wild flowers at all hazards; but he said he was too tired and completely exhausted, just then, to walk back there again. He didn't care much about flowers anyway, and he hoped they would excuse him. If they wanted to do anything for him, he said they might give him something to eat, and he would probably feel better after he had filled up and got rested.

So those festive picnickers gathered around Peppergrass and sympathized with him, and fed him on the ruins of the basket of lunch he had inaugurated the festivities by sitting down on, and asked him questions, and made him forget his mishaps and think he was a person of some importance after all.

Everything went swimmingly with Peter for some time, and he began to think that Bug Hollow was going to be a pretty good place to spend the summer in—especially after he got a little better acquainted.

He was sorry he hadn't come there in the first place instead of wasting his time in Squashville.

Peppergrass began to feel first-rate. His old-time chipperness, so to speak, returned, and he felt like going ahead and running things and sort of showing the young fellows around Bug Hollow how a picnic ought to be managed.

Presently one of the young ladies suggested putting up swings, and Peter went in for the proposition at once.

He knew almost as much about putting up a swing as a blind cow, but that fact was not sufficient to keep him in the background.

Boldly he rushed to the front to assist in putting up those swings.

He stripped off his coat as he saw the other young fellows do, and proceeded to climb a tree.

Peppergrass was a phenomenal climber.

He would climb up about six feet, then slide back to the ground and take a fresh start.

Half a dozen times he tried this, and the perspiration began to ooze from every pore, the buttons began to drop off his vest one by one, his eyes bulged out in desperation, and his face got redder than a recently-spanked infant as each time he slid slowly but surely back to where he had started from.

"Go and borrow a ladder!"

"Chop the tree down, then see if you can climb it!"

"Go it, Peter; you'll fetch it in a year or so!"

"Spit on your hands and take a fresh hold!"

"Guess that's the first time he ever saw a tree!"

"Come off, sonny, and give somebody else a show."

Such were the sarcastic comments and sug-

gestions that were fired at Peppergrass by the young men who were watching his efforts.

But Peppergrass paid no attention to them.

He was bound to climb that tree now or perish right there on the spot in the attempt.

He gnashed his teeth, and tugged, and struggled and perspired, and with a final despairing effort succeeded in reaching the first limb about fifteen feet from the ground.

Peppergrass got outside of the limb, ready for business, and then he found that he had forgotten the rope.

Then he requested one of the young men to throw the end of the rope up to him so he could get that swing in working shape some time that afternoon.

The young man complied. He grasped that rope, coiled up four or five yards at one end and then stood back and braced himself and flung it up over the limb with as much force as if he was trying to throw the end of the rope to some one in San Francisco.

It came within an inch of Peppergrass's north ear, and in dodging it to get out of the way he lost his balance on the limb, fell over backward, turned a complete somerset and came down with a crash kerslap in a basket of dishes that some careless individual had left right in the spot where he wanted to light.

It was sad, mighty sad—for Peppergrass.

The rest of the picnickers seemed to enjoy it very well—all except the old lady who owned the crockery. She lit on Peppergrass like a left-handed hen-hawk on a spring chicken, and made him pay for every last solitary cracked saucer and tea-cup and smashed dinner-plate in the lot.

Then Peter put his coat on and sat around and watched the rest of the exercises without making himself quite so conspicuous as he had done previously heretofore in the immediate past.

But when the picnic was over, and the young people got ready to go home, Peter braced up and began to feel and act about the same as usual—if not more so.

He was leaving the grove in company with the rest of the crowd, when he chanced to espy a beautifully-constructed hornets' nest in the top of a bush about six feet from the ground.

"What is that?" he innocently asked, pointing at the round object.

"That? Oh, that's the nest of a red-headed thing-um-bob! They're very scarce in this country. Better bring it along as a curiosity," carelessly responded one of the young men.

Peppergrass thought he would act on the suggestion.

He approached the bush, reached up and rudely yanked that "thing-um-bob's nest" from its resting-place, and then he suddenly dropped it with a wild yell—and the rest of the way to his boarding-house he was accompanied by a little picnic party of raging hornets.

And when he got there, his head was swelled up so big, and he acted so excited-like, that Nabbins mistook him for a crazy tramp and knocked him down with a garden-rake, and was about to stab him with a picket, when the trio of old maids arrived just in time to save his life.

## CHAPTER XIII.

PEPPERGRASS RECEIVES A TENDER MISSIVE—HAUNTED BY AN ANCIENT BUT TENDER HEARTED MAIDEN—PREPARES TO LEAVE BUG HOLLOW, BUT NUBBINS SERVES AN INJUNCTION ON HIM.

IT was several days after the hornet episode before Peter Peppergrass was able to appear in public again.

He did not want to come out before folks until his head had resumed its normal size, and his nose had ceased to present the appearance of a ripe cucumber, that some one had accidentally stepped on.

Peppergrass was a little particular about his looks, and he didn't think it would make a good impression on the young ladies of Bug-Hollow if they should see him in his present condition.

So he bided his time in patience—that is, as patiently as he could, which wasn't enough to hurt—and in the mean time, having nothing else to do, he thought up new schemes of conquest.

When he got around before the dazzled gaze of the public once more, he was going to do—well, goodness only knows what he wasn't going to do!

He had more schemes and projects in his head than an inventor, but about ten out of nine of them were doomed to be glittering failures, as Peppergrass eventually discovered when he tried to put them in operation.

In other words, as a failure the most of Peppergrass's plans were a first-class success.

But let us not anticipate.

Let us follow Peter in his mildly-reckless career, and take the bitter with the sour just as it comes along.

The third day of Peppergrass's enforced bivouac in the house, he received a dainty little note.

It was post-marked "Bug Hollow," and ran as follows:

"DEAR PETER:—I have felt for you from the bottom of my tender and affectionate young heart ever since your horrible picnic experience, but I have had no opportunity to be alone with you and tell you my feelings. I long to have a quiet chat with you. Come out to Perkins's mill-pond, on Gooseberry Lane, at 7:30 this evening, and meet

"Yours lovingly, N."

Peppergrass read the unique epistle through forward, backward and sideways; then he got up and looked admiringly at himself in the glass, felt of his nose to see that it was all right, and finally began musing aloud:

"By jingo! this is something like business. I thought I'd make an impression on the country girls after a while. Wonder who she is, anyway? N—N—ah. Yes—no, it can't be, either—but, yes, it must be: it is Nellie Spriggins. Her name begins with N, and I'll bet my mustache it's her. She is sorry she laughed at me the other day, and she wants to beg my pardon and make up. Well, I reckon she will find Peter on hand at 7:30 sharp."

And she did—at least she didn't; but the young lady who wrote the letter did.

She was a giddy young thing, just thirty-nine years old by the town-clock, and the first letter of her name was Arabella Nubbins.

She was waiting for him with her hands

clasped over the front portion of her angular anatomy, in the attitude of a small boy who has been eating too many green apples, and the moment Peppergrass got within reach she impulsively started forward, flung herself convulsively on his manly shirt-front, clasped her bony arms around his neck and nearly sawed his head off before he had succeeded in tearing himself loose and backing away to a place of safety.

"Immortal spooks! What do you mean, woman?" exclaimed Peppergrass, picking up his cane and high hat which had fallen to the ground in the struggle, and smoothing down his rumpled dry-goods.

"It is your own Arabella! Don't you recognize me?" gushingly replied the ancient female, with a seductive leer.

"Yes, I recognize you fast enough; but what in the dickens are you pitching on a feller and mussing him up in this style for?" angrily demanded Peppergrass, backing off a yard or two further.

"Oh! Peter, you don't mean what you say; you surely cannot! Do not jest with me, or you will break my young heart. This is the first time I have ever felt the gentle thrill of love permeating my—I mean, this is the first time—in short, you alone of all the men I have met have stirred up my virgin affections and caused them to vegetate and sprout, and now, when those twining tendrils of love would cling about the object that called them to life, you—you rudely repulse me! It is too—too much!" and the antiquated Nubbins placed her handkerchief to her face and gave vent to several large-sized sobs.

Still Peppergrass was not moved—except in the other direction.

"I don't exactly understand what you are driving at, Miss Nubbins," he said. "I have never said anything that would induce you to think I regarded you with affection. I have never encouraged your attentions, and I don't see why you come out to haunt me here. I expected to meet somebody else—a different female entirely. In fact, I thought the N stood for Nellie—"

"Yes; but it didn't," interrupted the ancient Arabella, who had found her voice once more; "it meant Nubbins, your own loving Nubbins, and now I want you to understand that I do not propose to have my affections trifled with. You have encouraged me, and you came here to meet me, where I am away from the protection of my father and sisters, and now—"

"Oh, don't worry; your age protects you," put in Peppergrass.

Then Arabella was madder than ever, and she gnashed her store teeth and shrieked:

"My father shall hear of this insult! My age protects me, eh? I shall acquaint him with your words, and let him settle the matter with you. He is a dangerous man when aroused, and I warn you to look out for yourself. Adieu, false man; adieu!" and the angular old maid, with a farewell wave of her hand, faded away in the darkness like a spook-haunted vision.

Peppergrass rubbed his eyes to see that he was awake, and then he too faded away.

This was really the worst experience he had

passed through yet, and he resolved to leave Bug Hollow the very next morning, and seek fresh fields and pastures new—and a boarding-place where there were no scheming old maids to molest and make him afraid.

He hastened to the Nubbins domicile, reaching there before the giddy Arabella, paid up his board-bill in full, and then told Mr. Nubbins that he had unexpectedly received some news that would necessarily hasten his departure, and that he would leave on the early train before breakfast the next morning.

Nubbins expressed his deep sorrow at losing such a good boarder, and said he trusted the girls had made it pleasant for him while he was there, and he cordially invited him to run out and make them a visit whenever he felt like enjoying good society, and it wouldn't cost him a cent.

Peppergrass replied that "he would do so—in about forty or fifty years," he added, under his breath; and then he went to his room to pack up.

Presently he heard Arabella come in, and for a few moments there was a confused medley of sounds down there in the Nubbins family circle, fifty cents admission, clergymen and summer boarders half price, and then Mr. Nubbins came stumping up the stairs, and dawned into Peppergrass's room with a club in one hand and an old rusty horse-pistol, that hadn't been fired off since the year 1776, in the other.

Peppergrass executed a rapid flank movement under the bed, pulled his valise around in front of him, and then tremblingly demanded to know what was wanted.

"Well, sir," grimly replied Nubbins, taking a seat by the door and bringing the muzzle of that Revolutionary horse-pistol to bear in Peter's direction. "I want to know what your intentions are in regard to my daughter?"

"I intend to leave her alone if she will leave me alone," feebly squeaked Peppergrass from under the bed.

"Oh! you do, eh?" howled Nubbins, getting up and jabbing excitedly around under the bed with his club trying to dislodge Peppergrass from his ambush. "That is your game, is it? Intend to leave my daughter alone and skip out, do you, after winning her innocent young affections unbeknown to her parents? Come out where I can destroy you! Come forth, you heartless viper, and let me get a crack at you with this shooting-iron!"

But Peppergrass resolutely declined to come forth and be massacred.

He got several vigorous pokes in the ribs from the club, but managed to ward off the most of them with his carpet sack behind which he was intrenched, and he evinced no intention of coming out and meeting the enemy in the open field.

Nubbins finally got tired of poking at him with the club, and he desisted with the remark that he would give Peppergrass until morning to think it over, and if he concluded to make amends for his conduct by marrying the heart-broken Arabella, well and good; if not he would then proceed to shed several quarts of his choicest gore and transform him into a cold clammy corpse, and he wouldn't charge him a cent for the operation either!

After which highly exhilarating and cheerful announcement, Nubbins gathered up his weapons and withdrew, locking the door on the outside and taking the key with him, leaving the unfortunate Peppergrass in a state of mind bordering on the ragged edge of terror and the dark confines of despair—also under the bed.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

PEPPERGRASS FLIES FROM BUG HOLLOW—TAKES A RIDE ON A FREIGHT TRAIN—FINALLY LANDS IN CROWBAIT CORNERS, THEN PROCEEDS TO POKE UP A CAST IRON BULL-DOG.

PEPPERGRASS waited for some time to make sure the belligerent Nubbins had gone for good, then he crawled feebly out from his uncomfortable position under the bed, rose to his feet, and staggered weakly across the room to a chair.

He looked at least nine years older than he did before he received the pleasant little call from his landlord, and even his clothes appeared wrinkled and careworn.

Peter was in an interesting predicament.

He began to realize that old Nubbins meant business.

Something had to be done very soon or he would perish an innocent victim of misplaced affections and an enraged old granger who had more daughters on hand (and they had been on hand a long time, too) than he wanted, apparently, and was bound to fasten them like a millstone about somebody else's neck or inaugurate a graveyard with some one in the attempt.

His only safety lay in flight.

He must get out before morning dawned and Nubbins came up to carry out his direful threat.

But how was he to escape?

He looked out of the window. It seemed a long distance down to the ground, but it was necessary to get there in some way.

At once he began his preparations. When midnight came and everything was quiet about the house and grounds Peter was ready to make his exit from durance vile and the Nubbins mansion.

Cautiously and noiselessly he lowered to the ground with a rope made by tearing his linen duster into strips, a bundle consisting of his carpet-sack, high hat, cane and shoes tied securely together.

Then he sat down on the window-sill with his stocking feet outside, felt carefully along the clapboards until he got hold of the lightning-rod, which ran to the roof near the window, then swinging himself from his perch on the sill, he commenced the descent.

Half of the distance was accomplished in safety—then something broke loose, and Peppergrass went down with a rush taking the lightning-rod with him.

The fastenings of the rod were old and decayed and they had given way under the sudden strain.

Peppergrass fell all in a heap, so to speak, with that rickety old lightning-rod on top of him and twisted about his fragile form.

A moment later Mr. Nubbins, who had been aroused by the noise, appeared at the upper window in his red flannel night-cap, with a light-

ed tallow candle in one hand and that same old pre-historic pistol in the other.

He pulled the trigger of the venerable weapon seventeen times in succession before Peppergrass got disentangled from that ruined lightning-rod, grabbed his bundle and galloped out of range—just seventeen times by actual count did Nubbins yank the trigger of that rickety relic of the Revolution, with the pleasing intention of filling his fleeing boarder's anatomy with a collection of half-ounce bullets.

But there was no harm done.

The weapon hung fire and Peppergrass escaped with his life, although he expected every second that deadly horse-pistol would finally make up its mind to go off and blow a skylight through him, and muss up his mortal remains so his friends wouldn't recognize the corpse, when the coroner gathered him up and shipped him back to the city.

An earnest, yearning desire to go 'way off somewhere out of range of Nubbins and his great-grandfather's antiquated shooting-iron, before the danged thing exploded, filled Peter's mind and lent speed to his feet.

He lingered not to put on his shoes and assume his high hat, but dashed down the dusty road bareheaded and in his stocking feet, with the bundle tucked safely under his arm.

Straight to the depot he went, hoping to board a night train and leave Bug Hollow far behind him before morning. But in this he was disappointed. He found the depot closed and there were no indications of life about the place. Evidently he would have to wait till morning to get away.

But Peppergrass was equal to the emergency. There was an empty freight car on a side track near the station, and he climbed into it, unrolled his bundle and resumed his outer clothes; then sat down in the corner to wait for day-break intending when morning came to dash out and board the first train that chanced along, no matter in which direction it was going, so long as it took him out of Bug Hollow.

While waiting he fell asleep, which was not to be wondered at considering the siege he had gone through, and when he woke up he found some one had closed the car door, fastening him in, and worse yet—the car was in motion!

A freight train had come along and taken on the empty car (as the conductor supposed it to be) during the night, and Peppergrass was being whirled away somewhere—he didn't know just where, but he would have given two cents (or more if necessary) to find out.

"By George! I'm in a box now," muttered Peppergrass, as he rubbed his eyes and looked around.

And so he was—in a box-car; and that wasn't the worst of it, either; he wasn't sure just when he was going to get out.

He was willing enough to get away from Bug Hollow, but he didn't want to be caged up in a cattle car, same as a mule or a cow, and be yanked away on a freight train.

Furthermore, Peter decided that it was an outrage on his rights as a citizen, and he couldn't stand it.

No, sir, he would not.

Those railroad men had no right to shut him

up in that way and snatch him along on their old freight train, without waking him up or saying a word to him regarding the direction in which he wished to travel.

He would make them suffer for their temerity when he got out.

In the mean time he thought it would be a good idea to make a noise and attract somebody's attention.

So he began yelling and pounding on the car door with his cane.

He pounded and yelled for awhile, then he yelled and pounded a spell for a change, and finally he pounded and yelled some more.

Then after a short pause to get his breath and cool off, he began again and varied the programme as before for the next half-hour.

The car he was in was next to the caboose, and finally he made himself heard.

The train came to a halt.

Then the conductor and two or three brakemen came and opened the car door, carelessly yanked Peppergrass forth, and slid him down an embankment on his back, and cuffed him around as if he didn't cost a cent, and wanted to know "what in thunder he was stealing a ride for?"

Peppergrass tried to explain that he wasn't stealing a ride, and to tell them who he was; but those bold bad railroaders said it didn't make any difference if he was the Rangoon of India, one tramp was just as bad as another when he tried to beat his way, no matter how he was dressed. And then they kicked Peter's hat and cane and carpet-sack down the embankment after him, climbed back on the train and rolled swiftly away, leaving him to reflect on their abrupt conduct at his leisure.

Peppergrass was mad enough to annihilate those railroaders; but he was afraid he couldn't overtake the train on foot, so he didn't try it.

Putting on his high hat, and brushing the cinders and dust off his once gaudy raiment, Peter sat down on a convenient boulder, and locked himself over, then sorrowfully shook his head.

A few more such experiences as he had passed through and people would take him for a tramp sure.

And besides, if he wasn't a little more careful, he would be under the painful necessity of hanging up his tailor for another suit of clothes very soon after he returned to the city, so he thought he had better go slow.

His vacation was fast drawing to a close, now, and he felt that during the balance of his sojourn in the country he ought to steer clear of people of belligerent tendencies who couldn't understand his ways, and try to obtain some real, genuine, country recreation and enjoy himself, and have enough fun to make up for what he had previously missed.

This seemed to be a good plan, and Peppergrass proceeded at once to put it into operation.

Gathering up his personal property he set forth with a light heart and a sore spine to scoop in the remaining fun in the country.

He followed the railroad track until he reached another small village, which bore the euphonious title of Crowbait Corners, as Peter ascertained by consulting the first small boy he met,

Peter next asked the boy if the people around there took in summer boarders.

"Reckon so—takes 'em in purty badly, sometimes, I guess. Leastways that's what dad says," glibly responded the boy.

"I'm looking for a quiet, respectable boarding-house," continued Peppergrass. Now, boy, do you suppose I can get what I want around here?"

"Guess so; and you may get more than you want, maybe, if you're too fresh. Can't most generally sometimes tell till you've tried it," chirped the boy.

It seemed that the boys here were about the same as they were in Squashville and Bug Hollow.

Peppergrass grasped his cane tighter and looked very hard at the boy for an instant.

He was undecided whether to cane him or not, but when the youth picked up a small-sized rock in each hand and began to act as if he had decided objections to being caned, Peppergrass concluded to let him go.

He ducked his head just in time to avoid having his high hat knocked into a shapeless ruin by one of the small boy's missiles, and then passed hastily on in search of a boarding-house.

He saw a place presently that he thought would just about suit him—provided they took boarders.

There was a fine lawn in front of the house, and reclining on the grass near a rustic seat beside the pathway, Pete espied, as he stepped inside of the gate, one of those ornamental, cast-iron bull-dogs that economical people sometimes place in their yards to scare away tramps. At least he thought it was a dog of the cast-iron variety, it lay there so rigid and still with its eyes closed. That dog looked so natural and life-like, and appeared so much like a real, *bona fide* bull-dog that Peppergrass smiled aloud to think how the first tramp who came along would probably get fooled by it.

Then he stepped up and tapped it gently with his cane—and the next instant he was galloping at break neck speed across the lawn with that aroused bull-dog clinging to his coat-tail.

#### CHAPTER XV.

PEPPERGRASS FLEES FROM THE CAST-IRON BULL-DOG—ENGAGES BOARD WITH FARMER SLAMMER — GETS INTO A "NICE, QUIET PLACE" THIS TIME—GOES OUT TO HELP SLAMMER BREAK A COLT.

As Peppergrass wildly fled across the lawn, trying in vain to dislodge that animal from his death-grip on his coat-tail, he began gradually to tumble to the fact that perhaps it wasn't a cast-iron bull-dog after all.

It seemed 'most too lively and chuck-full of business for a "purp" of the cast iron persuasion, and Peppergrass wasn't laughing quite as much just then as he had been a few moments before, when thinking of how that poor tramp (in case he happened along) was going to be scared by a make-believe dog.

There was no fun in the present predicament—if there was, Peter failed to see it—and presently he began calling for help.

"Help! Fire!! Police!!! Call off your dog!!!!" he yelled, desperately, as he made another lap around the yard in double quick time, with that determined bull-dog still clinging to him closer than a brother—or a sister, either, for that matter (somebody else's sister, of course; that's understood).

In response to Peter's yells the owner of the dog appeared on the scene and took a hand in the rumpus.

He picked up a stick and dispersed the dog, much to Peter's relief, then he invited our valiant hero to gather up his carpet-sack and other personal property, which he had dropped during his circus with the festive canine, and skip by the light of the moon, or a little sooner, if convenient.

Peppergrass skipped—at once.

He concluded that the climate right around there in that immediate vicinity, so to speak, was almost too sultry for every-day use, so he scooped in his valuables, such as they were, and emigrated a mile or so further out in the country.

His attention was next attracted by a farmhouse that stood near the highway.

It was a quiet, cosey-looking place.

There was no ornamental bull-dog, nor any other kind, in the front yard; so Peppergrass went in and rung the door-bell.

The way you ring a door-bell in the country is to take a club, or a brick-bat, or your knuckles, or 'most anything that comes handy, and bang against the door until you attract somebody's attention.

However, not having an accident insurance on his knuck'les, and seeing nothing else convenient, Peppergrass used his cane. After some pounding on the door, it was opened by an old fellow, airily clad in a last-year's linen duster, straw hat with the rear section of the rim torn off, blue-jean overalls and a pair of cowhide boots that had apparently been constructed on some dry-dock, and been launched in the Jersey mud about nine years previously.

To this typical granger Peppergrass stated his business, and in reply the shrewd old fellow hinted that he was not averse to turning an honest penny by taking him for a boarder the balance of the season.

Then Peppergrass said he would like to ask a few questions before the bargain was concluded, as he had been taken in pretty badly several times that season, and he was getting a little particular about his surroundings, etc.

The farmer told him all right, to fire away with his blamed conundrums, and Peppergrass braced up and began:

"You haven't got any rantankerous old maids around the house that you're anxious for some feller to lug off, have you?"

"Haven't heerd of any," was the granger's reply.

"No bull-dogs or watch-dogs or other ferocious critters laying around asleep, waiting for a chance to hook onto somebody's coat-tail, have you?"

"Noap."

"Any fish-ponds without any fish in them around loose on the place?"

"Noap."

"Nor mad bulls, or other savage animals, or any hired man who don't know enough to treat people with becoming deference and respect?"

"I reckon not."

"Well, I guess we can strike a bargain, then, Mr.—ah, Mr.— I didn't exactly catch your name on the start."

"Slammer—Simon Slammer," suggested the farmer.

"All right, Mr. Slammer," went on Peppergrass, "I think this is the place I've been looking for, judging from your description of it, so if you'll just fix up your best room I'll hang around here the balance of the season and get a little solid comfort."

The farmer replied that everything should be arranged to Peter's satisfaction, and the bargain was concluded, and our perennial and irrepressible hero was duly installed in the Slammer household as summer boarder.

Everything passed off uneventfully for one day; strange as it may seem, one whole day by the town-clock elapsed without Peppergrass getting into a scrape of any sort, manner or description!

But the next morning he turned himself loose and the fun began.

Mr. Slammer had a spirited three-year-old colt that he intended to commence breaking that day, and of course as soon as Peppergrass heard of it he was anxious to assist.

He said he was pretty well posted on the horse question, and he thoughtfully offered to help the farmer in his task.

The plain, undecorated truth was that a wild Zulu, imported direct from Kamschatka or Hoboken, would have been of just about as much use around there helping break that colt as Peppergrass was. The Zulu might have seen a colt before, and that was about all Peppergrass had done. He had never ridden one, and he hadn't the least idea as to whether it was usual to go up a step-ladder to mount a horse, or climb up on the barn and drop off on the animal's back.

But Slammer was not aware of Peppergrass's deficiencies on this score. He thought from his talk that he must know considerably more about horses than Rarey ever dared to, so he replied that he would like to have his valuable assistance in breaking that colt, and together they sauntered out to the barnyard.

Slammer brought the colt out of the stable into the yard, and after half an hour of hard work (during which Peppergrass materially assisted him by standing on the other side of the fence and yelling at the top of his voice: "Whoa, there! whoa, Bill! look out or he'll jump over the barn!") managed to get it saddled and bridled.

Then he was ready for business.

Slammer asked Peppergrass if he wished to try the first ride, and tame the fierce charger's heart of fire, and teach the unruly beast that man was its master, or words to that effect.

Peppergrass haughtily replied that he did. He said that was what he came out for, chiefly, and he would ride that colt or perish right there in the attempt.

Then Peter climbed up on the highest portion

of the barnyard fence, and requested Mr. Slammer to back the colt up to the fence so he could spring on its back when it wasn't looking.

Slammer complied.

Peter gave a spring—and the colt did, too. It shied abruptly to one side, and the result was that the amateur horse-tamer took an inglorious tumble in the dust with which the yard was paved.

But luckily he was not injured, and in an instant he was on his feet again ready for a second trial, which resulted same as the first. The fiery untamed steed stepped abruptly aside just as Peppergrass leaped and again he went sprawling on his hands and knees.

This naturally excited and displeased Peppergrass somewhat, and after getting on his feet once more he danced and howled and yelled and got off a lot of three-cornered Greek adjectives that he had picked up several years before at school and stored away in one of the vacant lofts of his mind for use on just such occasions as the present.

By this time nearly all of the people in the neighborhood had arrived on the spot and were taking a deep interest in the proceedings.

They leaned across the fence and chipped in with their free-and-easy comments and sarcastic advice; and they did not charge anything for their time or labor, either. It was all free gratis.

"Go it, Rarey; you're good for him!" Encouragingly shouted the first.

"Better blindfold the colt. He's afraid of that thing that's trying to get on him!" chipped in the second.

"Borrow a ladder and set it up against the horse, then you can climb on easier!" suggested number three.

"Bet a dollar he never rode a horse in his life!" yelled the fourth man as he produced a battered trade-shekel from his pants pocket.

"He'd be a noble horse-jockey in a race—if all the other horses were blind or crippled!" commented another of the gang.

"Guess they'd have to postpone the race till the next day to give him a chance to get ready for the start!" sarcastically observed the last member of the admiring crowd, at which they all yelled and cheered—all except Peppergrass. He was too full of business just then to pay any attention to sarcasm.

That colt had to be broken to the saddle. He had come out there to attend to the job, and he was going to do it or know the reason why. Again he mounted the fence, and this time he also succeeded in mounting the colt.

He sprung into the saddle, and instead of placing his feet into the stirrups as some people do, he left them dangling loosely at the side of the colt after a fashion of his own; and as he sat there astride of the startled steed he looked about as graceful as a pair of old-fashioned tongs hanging on a board fence—just about.

Slammer asked Peppergrass if he was ready for the send-off, and upon receiving an affirmative nod of the head (Peppergrass felt too important to speak to common folks just then, so he merely nodded his head in a lofty sort of way, and glanced superciliously around as though it was an act of great condescension on

his part to display his horsemanship before the public) the farmer let go of the animal's head and stepped aside.

That was all the colt was waiting for. The next instant it dashed over the barnyard gate and galloped around the adjoining lot at full speed with the self-advertised horse-tamer lying down flat on his back, clinging for dear life to the animal's mane and shouting for help at every jump.

Peppergrass wanted some one to spit on their hands and dash forth and stop that fiery untamed courser in his wild career and rescue him from his perilous position. But nobody dashed forth. They didn't appear to be dashing to any great extent just then.

The more Peppergrass yelled for help the less he got of it. That hard-hearted crowd just stood around and lifted up their voices with great unanimity, so to speak, and laughed aloud at Peter's awkward and ridiculous predicament.

Slammer was the only man that didn't laugh. He stood and looked on in helpless amazement as the frightened colt dashed around the lot with the howling Peppergrass glued to its back.

Finally Slammer decided that something ought to be done. The only way he saw was to lasso the colt and bring it to a stand-still till Peppergrass dismounted, then engage a regularly-ordained horse jockey to do the balance of the breaking act. So he procured a long rope from the barn, made a slip noose in one end, then got it into position for a throw, and sallied forth in pursuit of Peppergrass and his flying steed.

Slammer had an idea he could throw the lasso over the colt's head the first time, just as he had heard of cowboys doing in the West, and bring it suddenly to a halt.

He succeeded nobly.

The lasso missed the animal's head, but it caught Peppergrass around the shoulders and yanked him to the ground so quick that he didn't have time to admire the scenery much along the route.

Slammer was careful to haul him off in a mud-hole where the ground was soft, so it didn't do much damage except to his clothes, and as soon as Peppergrass came to he arose as one man and dashed unanimously into the house, out of sight, amid the enthusiastic plaudits of the crowd.

The farmer told him the colt wasn't more than half "broke" yet; but he refused to stay out there and have anything more to do with the job.

## CHAPTER XVI.

PETER SECURES SEVERAL HUNKS OF FUN AND OTHER THINGS—GOES OUT ROWING IN A LEAKY CLAM SCOW—FINDS WELCOME SHADE AND A SHOT GUN BEHIND IT.

THE next day, after Peppergrass had recovered from the horse-breaking episode, and had got the dry mud all scraped off from his checked suit, he arrayed himself in his ten-cent cane, high hat and red necktie, and started out to introduce himself to Crowbait Corners; and

also with the laudable intention of seeing what was going on in the place and scooping in whatever fun there was lying around loose.

He succeeded in scooping in several large-sized chunks of it before night—so large in fact that he couldn't conveniently handle them.

That was the principal trouble with Peppergrass—he was, in the expressive language of the far West, always "biting off more than he could chew," in the way of fun; and the most of it didn't seem to agree with him very well, either.

Still he was not discouraged.

He bravely continued his quest for amusement and fun, unmindful of the disappointments and mishaps that crossed his path, and he meant to keep on till the people realized who he was, as he expressed it, and then he thought perhaps he would be able to begin enjoying himself and pick up a little genuine first-class fun without working so hard for it.

He hoped so at least; and he thought Crowbait Corners would be a good place to begin. So that morning when Peppergrass set out on his travels about the Corners, he kept on the *qui vive* (French for keeping his eye peeled) for anything that promised sport.

Presently he met a farmer's boy, perched on top of a load of marl, driving a span of dun-colored mules.

Marl was something new to Peppergrass, and his curiosity being aroused he thought he would find out what it was. He motioned to the boy, who brought his mules to a halt, and gazed at Peppergrass in a dreamy sort of way as if wondering where he had escaped from, and if the keepers knew he was out.

Then Peppergrass, pointing at the marl with which the wagon was loaded, inquired:

"Sonny, what are you drawing?"

"I ain't drawing nothin'. The mules is doin' the drawing, I reckon," drawled the lad, with a gentle droop to his left eyelid.

"I mean, what have you got on?" went on Peppergrass.

"Clothes, I guess, mostly. What d'ye think I'd have on, anyway?"

Peppergrass was getting red in the face now. Looking sternly at the daring youth, he exclaimed:

"Boy, I don't want any more of your fooling! When I ask a civil question I want a civil reply. Do you hear me?"

"Well, I reckon I ain't *deef*," blithely responded the lad. Just sing your little song, and I'll see what I can do to accommodate you. Chirp right up, mister; don't be afraid!"

The boy was standing up on the load now, and Peter thought it would be an easy matter to corner him up and secure the information he was after, so he asked:

"Sonny, what I want to know is simply this: What are you standing on?"

"My feet, of course! Imagine I was standing on my head?" demanded the boy.

"I mean, what have you on that wagon?" said Peppergrass, assuming a belligerent attitude and shaking his cane threateningly at the audacious youth.

"Marl! dang your eyes, marl!" shouted the lad. "Why didn't you say what you wanted

in the first place? It's marl, and we use it to spread on green things. Take a sample of it along. Take the whole load if you want it. Don't be backward. Help yourself. Here comes a handful; catch it, lively, now. Want any more? Oh, you're going, air you? Well, ta-ta!" and the farmer's boy grasped the reins and started up his dun-colored mules at a lively pace, while Peppergrass hastily slid in the opposite direction, clawing that "sample" of marl (which the youth had so thoughtfully handed to him) out of his right ear.

Peppergrass had finally got the information he wanted—and a pretty fair-sized donation of something else, besides.

And yet he was not happy.

In fact he felt quite grieved over the affair, and he didn't fully recover his equanimity till he had reached the village of Crowbait Corners.

The place was situated on a small stream called Tomcat river, which was a favorite resort for amateur athletes who wished to excel in Hanlan the oars (original joke copied from a last year's medical almanac; don't know who they stole it from. An explanatory chart and a chromo always accompanies this joke.)

Nobody knew why it was called Tomcat river, but it was generally supposed it received that name because it was impossible to drown a tom-cat in it. Every boy who has ever attempted to coax a cat of the Thomas gender to a watery grave knows that is almost impossible to induce the animal to drown decently in any ordinary stream. To make a cat stay permanently drowned you want to pick out a place where the water is at least sixty feet deep, then attach a string of dumb bells, old horse-shoes, gate-hinges, flat-irons, and other jewelry to the doomed animal's neck, and anchor it securely to the bottom of the river. The cat won't trouble you any more after that.

But to throw a cat in 'most any ordinary stream with the expectation of seeing it lose its nine lives is only time wasted. Any one who expects to drown a cat in four feet of water would yank the gold medal for lunacy in a prize competition for incurable idiots.

That is the kind of a ten-cent ripple Tomcat river was. The water was about four feet deep in spots, and in other places it wasn't. It wasn't a good river to drown cats in, but it was first-class to practice rowing on, because when a fellow got tired of sculling he could climb out of the boat and wade ashore without getting his feet wet—that is, not as wet as he would in some rivers.

But we are losing sight of our old friend Peter Peppergrass.

When Peter reached Crowbait Corners, after interviewing the farmer boy, the first place he struck out for was Tomcat river. He wanted to get out on the water beneath the umbrageous shades of the overhanging trees, where he could lay back in his velvet cushioned gondola and listen dreamily to the mellifluous song of the female mosquito and the gay chirp of the faithful watch-dog in the distance. P. S. I don't know what umbrageous shades means, but I am betting five cents, all in pennies, that there is where Peppergrass wanted to get.

He wanted to strike out where it was cool,

and paddle around, and gather pond lilies and bull-frogs and things, and enjoy himself.

But first he must procure a boat.

Peppergrass hunted around till he found a tarry son of Neptune (he had a regular father and mother, besides, but I don't know their names) putting up the knot holes in a clam-scow. Then he interviewed the old salt, and ascertained that the said clam scow was intended for hiring out to people from the city at so much per hour and found—found in the bottom of the river, generally, if the man who hired it wasn't mighty careful.

Peppergrass looked the craft over very critically (his step uncle's half brother on his second-cousin's side was formerly chief clerk on a garbage scow, consequently Peppergrass knew all about boats, or thought he did, at least, and he wasn't going to let any old tar fool him), and then said he was afraid when he got out in the river where there was more or less dampness laying around loose the water would ooze through the pores of that boat and wet his feet.

Then the old salt laid aside his putty-jabber, and rose up and gave Peppergrass a slap on the back that jarred four of his best teeth loose, and in a voice resembling the hoarse growl of an unchained tempest beating on a rock-bound coast "blasted his tarry top lights" and "shivered his timbers." for five minutes or so; and then he assured Peppergrass that all the crowned heads of Europe, Van Dieman's Land, Kalamazoo and New Jersey had gone out cruising in that clam-scow, and none of them, so far as heard from, had ever got their sandals wet or had any complaints to make when they got back. And he fiercely demanded to know if Peppergrass considered himself any better than the Khan of Chinese Tartary or the Emperor of Hoboken, for instance?

Peter admitted that he didn't.

He said if the clam-scow was good enough for the nobility it was good enough for him, and he requested the ancient son of the briney to rig the craft up for a two hours' cruise, and he would take it without any further parley.

Thereupon the proprietor of the clam-scow made another jab at her with his putty-knife, threw in a couple of clumsy oars, that looked as if they had formerly done service as old-fashioned well sweeps, and a tin wash-basin to use as a bailer, and then shoved the rickety old concern into the water with the remark that everything was in readiness for the cruise.

Peter stepped into the boat, laid aside his cane, and grasped the oars, and by a series of awkward and intensely startling maneuvers that nearly caused the untimely death of the old salt in a fit of astonishment, he finally managed to get out into the middle of the stream.

Then the fun began—at least it began soon afterward.

Peter's rowing was something phenomenal.

He pulled, and puffed, and perspired in half a dozen different languages but with very little result. First he would dip the oars too deep into the water and slide off the seat in front; then he would "catch a crab" and tumble over backward in the bottom of the boat.

Peppergrass worked hard for half an hour,

and still the umbrageous shades that he was in search of seemed as far off as ever. He didn't know if he would ever get there, in fact. The harder he worked the less distance he seemed to cover; and to make matters worse that ancient clam-scow began to leak in nine different places at once.

Peppergrass was so busy rowing that he didn't notice the water until it got up over the tops of his shoes, then the dampness caused him to suspect there must be something wrong. He investigated and found there was. Peppergrass thought perhaps it would be a good plan to stop rowing for awhile and bail a hogshead or so of water out of the boat.

He did so.

Then he struggled with the rowing apparatus again for a spell; then he bailed some more. And he kept right on changing around in this way for an hour or more, until he was soaking wet with river water and perspiration combined, and his hands were blistered, his nose sunburnt and scorched to a fiery hue, and he felt mean, miserable and disgusted all over.

But, lo! just at that discouraging juncture Peppergrass espied the coveted shade ahead. It consisted of a weeping willow, a scrub oak and three alder bushes that grew close to the water's edge.

It was not a reckless profusion of shade by any means, but it was the best to be had, and Peppergrass pulled for it with the glowing eagerness of a bull-dog in pursuit of a lightning-rod peddler.

Peter began to brace up and feel good. At last his hopes were about to be realized, and he would soon be lying off in the shade recuperating from the exhausting struggle he had passed through.

Slowly but surely he approached the desired haven; the shade was only a few yards away; the bow of the boat began to grate on the shallow beach, and Peppergrass was about to haul in the oars and get ready to disembark, when the threatening muzzle of a double-barreled shot-gun was suddenly poked through the bushes and brought to bear on him, and a gruff voice shouted:

"Sheer off! sheer off thar, ye derned one-horse pirate, or I'll shoot a pint of bird-shot plum through yer blamed gizzard! That's the kind of a brass-mounted fightin' granger I am every time! Yer hear my gentle chirp?

"Come, dig out lively, or p-p goes ther old shootin' iron an' off goes yer consarned head!"

#### CHAPTER XVII.

GRAND FINALE—PEPPERGRASS GETS A DUCKING—THE OLD TAR TAKES UP A COLLECTION AND LEAVES HIM PENNILESS—PEPPERGRASS PEDESTRIANIZES BACK TO THE CITY IN DISGUST—HE HAS HAD FUN ENOUGH.

PEPPERGRASS turned pale as he heard those darkly ominous words and looked into the frowning muzzle of that shot gun.

It was plainly evident that the old granger was in deadly earnest, and Peppergrass lost no time in obeying his injunctions.

He "sheered off" and "dug out" as rapidly as possible; though it can readily be believed that he was somewhat nervous under the peculiar

circumstances. It was hard work to row and keep one eye on the threatening muzzle of that old fowling-piece, consequently he got all tangled up with the oars before he got out in the middle of the stream, and he caught more crabs, nautically speaking, in half an hour, than some first-class fishermen do in all day. And it was fun; oh, yes! it was dead loads of fun—for the granger.

He lay there behind the bushes and laughed until his sides ached at the excruciatingly comical figure Peppergrass cut in his desperate struggles to get out of range.

The old farmer did not care to be annoyed by people trespassing on his land, and he had merely intended to convey a hint to this effect to Peter's mind by giving him a mild scare. But he had succeeded far beyond his most sanguine expectations.

Peppergrass was badly frightened.

It shocked him to think that he had got into a community where the inhabitants were addicted to the cheerful habit of hiding behind a clump of bushes and poking out a double-barreled shotgun at suspicious-looking strangers who came straying around their premises. This reckless style of behavior seemed to indicate that the people around there didn't care much about company.

Peppergrass was only a pilgrim stranger, as it were, in Crowbait Corners; but he made up his mind right away that the society in that vicinity was 'most too exclusive and *sine die*, not to say *ne plus ultra*, for him.

He concluded to leave the place and go—well, he didn't know exactly where he would go yet.

The first heavy job he had on his hands was to row that clam-scow back to its anchorage, and pay the old tar for the use of it.

Rowing a craft of that sort, especially a leaky one, was difficult work at the best, and the intense excitement under which Peppergrass was laboring made it doubly hard.

Then, to add a few ounces more to his perspiring burden of misery, Peppergrass suddenly discovered to his horror and surprise that the boat was half full of water. During the dread moments when he was excitedly striving to get beyond the reach of the enemy's artillery, he had forgo ten all about bailing out, and the consequences were that Peter was extremely liable to get his feet wet way up to his neck pretty soon if he didn't look out.

The boat wouldn't float over fifteen minutes longer, unless the bailing out machinery was got under motion mighty expeditiously—and Peppergrass wildly began operations in his usual seamunlike style.

He stopped rowing and hastily grasped the wash basin and commenced throwing water like a whale spouting off the coast of Labrador; while the oars, which he had neglected to secure, slipped slowly from the row-locks and calmly drifted away.

Peppergrass saw them going and he threw aside the bailer, leaned over the side of the boat and made a frantic grab after the departing oars—and that settled the business! Over went the clam-scow, and Peppergrass plunged headlong into the water.

He disappeared for an instant, then he came up, with his eyes and mouth full of water, and began floundering and puffing like a grampus, and making a desperate effort to keep afloat, when the gruff voice of the old salt, who had been a witness of the catastrophe, hailed him from the shore:

"Belay there, ye land-lubber! What's the matter with ye?"

"Boat upset!" feebly responded Peter.

"All right; come ashore then, blast yer eyes!" roared the owner of the clam-scow, which was at present peacefully reposing in the bottom of the river; "I want to see ye a minute!"

"Can't swim with my clothes all on! Come and help me before I sink! quick!" gasped Peter, making another Herculean effort to keep on the surface.

"Git up and wade out, can't ye, ye long-legged loon! What're ye layin' down kickin' around and tryin' to drown yerself for in three feet of water, anyway? Want somebody to lam some sense into yer head, I reckon, don't ye?" roared the old boatman in reply, at the same time expectorating carelessly on his hands and picking up a seine stake about nine feet long.

Peppergrass took the hint.

He got up on his feet and found the water only came up to his shoulders, then he waded sulkily ashore to where the old tar was waiting for him with the improvised club.

The interview that ensued between them when Peppergrass landed was brief but right to the point.

The wily old boatman collected nine dollars of Peppergrass for the loss of his crazy old clam-scow, which at a wildly reckless estimate might have been worth thirty-five cents for kindling wood, but considered as a boat wasn't worth powder enough to blow it up.

It was a first-class bargain for the honest old salt; but it left Peppergrass stranded on a foreign shore—the shore of Tomcat river, in fact—without a cent in his pocket.

He had rescued the dilapidated ruins of his high hat from the watery elements, but his ten-cent cane and the beautiful fit of his checked suit were forever gone.

Peppergrass felt sad—mighty sad. In fact this was by long odds the saddest moment of his career.

It was impossible to remain longer in the country without money or credit—and Peter didn't want to stay any longer in that section of the country, anyway.

Squashville, Bug Hollow and Crowbait Corners had lost their charms for him.

He was suddenly smitten with a wild desire to get back to the city where he could get bitten by three or four mad-dogs, fall off the elevated road a couple of times, get clubbed by a policeman and run over by an ice-wagon or so, and enjoy a period of comparative rest and quiet.

But how was he to get there?

He turned his pockets inside out and ruefully shook his head.

The old tar had cleaned him out as slick as if the job had been performed by a regular highwayman.

Riding back to New York without money was out of the question; and it seemed like a rather long walk, but—well, Peppergrass made up his mind that he had to get there in some way.

And he did.

Three days later, just at dusk as the Jersey City ferry-boat was about to leave for the New York side, a dust-begrimed and weary-looking tramp, clad in the disreputable ruins of a battered high hat and a faded suit of checked clothes, that had shrunk up till they were four sizes too small for him, dodged quickly past the gate-keeper and dashed hurriedly down the gangway onto the departing boat, and hastily concealed himself behind a load of baled hay in the aisle, as if afraid some one would follow him up and try to collect his fare.

It was Peppergrass returning from his trip to the country.

His general appearance was a startling contrast to what it had been on the eventful morning of his advent in Squashville, a few brief days before; and he was also a considerably sadder if not a wiser youth.

On the whole Peter's trip to the country was not the dazzling success he had anticipated; and he says the next time he wants some fun he isn't going to explore New Jersey in search of it. The amusements common to the country are most too able-bodied and energetic to suit him, he says, and hereafter he will take his rural fun in smaller doses and try to struggle along with very few of them at that.

THE END.

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